

# **200 Years And Growing**

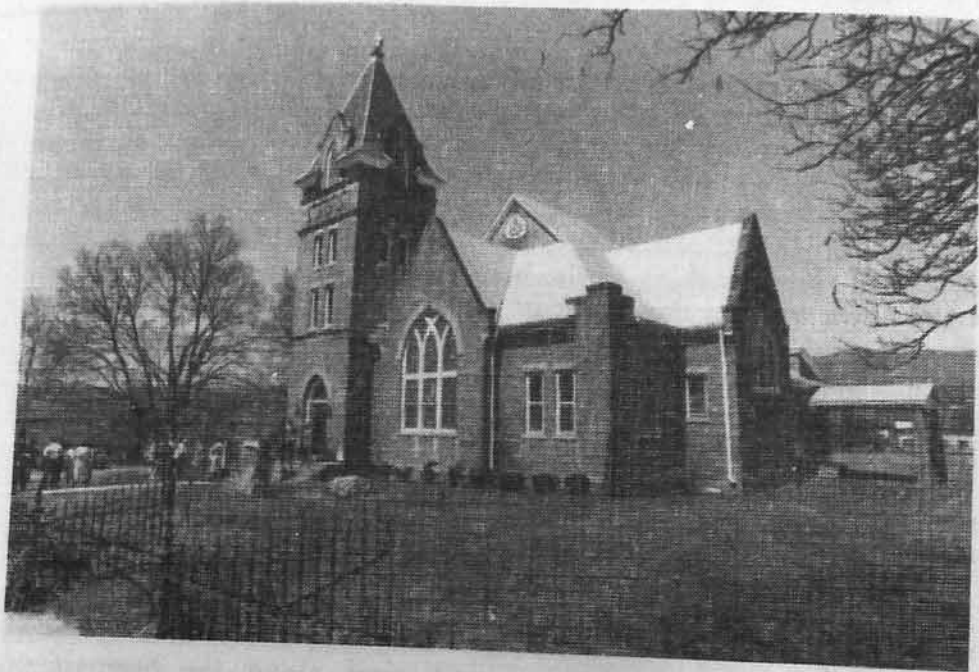


**A History:  
Oak Grove Presbyterian Church  
Hillsboro, West Virginia**

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## 200 Years And Growing



**A History:  
Oak Grove Presbyterian Church  
Hillsboro, West Virginia**

**The News Leader Press — Richwood  
June 1988**

## PREFACE

Two hundred years — and growing. Oak Grove Presbyterian Church is a healthy church. The congregation covers a span of ages from the very young to older adults.

Families are worshiping together — grandparents, parents and the youth. Dedicated Oak Grove ministers have tried to impress upon the minds of children that they are very much a part of the church family.

Through the years, descendants of some of the early organizers of the church have worshiped here with dedicated services. Also, new members through the years have dedicated their services with loving hearts and willing hands.

The early worship services were in the form of prayer meetings held in the homes of the early organizers of Oak Grove. (More details will be found in later chapters.) This is believed to have been common practice before the building of old Augusta Stone Church from which they left to come here.

In the Shenandoah Valley they had been trained by the preaching and most likely teaching of the highly educated Rev. John Craig. He was known both as the father of religion and father of education in the Shenandoah Valley. Rev. John Craig built churches and schools up and down the valley and taught the young men English, Greek, Latin, mathematics, science, and surveying. They not only became followers, but leaders where they happened to go.

The men of his congregation carried their rifles to church and stacked them in a corner in case of Indian attack. Rev. Craig preached with his rifle leaning against the pulpit.

Very likely, ancestors of some of our present congregation helped build the fort around Old Augusta Stone Church in earlier years before they came to the Little Levels. They came here well tempered in the face of danger and stress and went about the business of establishing their new homes and worshiping God in their new surroundings.

The life of this two hundred year old church shows a running pattern of Divine Providence from its early background to the present strong leadership of the young Rev. Clay Macaulay and his wife Pam.

Aging in years, but young,  
Leaving a history but not looking back,  
Courageous, but God fearing.  
Standing firm, but moving forward.  
We ask God's guidance for our future.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to credit John K. Fleming, former pastor of the church, who researched the early history of the Oak Grove Church. He wrote this history while pastor here, but due to the shortage of paper during World War II it was not printed until 1950. It was he who first found that the organizing date on the cornerstone was incorrect. By using his history, bringing it up to date and adding, this history was written.

Facts and dates have been attained from Dr. Dorsey D. Ellis, the author of "Look Unto The Rock", the history of the Presbyterian Church, US in West Virginia 1719 through 1974.

Information has been taken from "History of Pocahontas County 1981" and "McNeel Family Record" by Betsy Jordan Edgar.

Sessional records have been a prime source of information, while the history of Oak Grove Church prepared each year by the Women of the Church was also used for reference. Those historians have been Minnie Wallace, Agnes Cackley, Eva Beard Clutter, Elizabeth Beard, Carolyn Feagans Patton, Helen Painter, Arberta Shields, Mary McNeel Hilleary, Virginia Beard Callison, Katherine McClure Beard and Carolyn Callison Randolph.

Thanks go out to Bill and Claudia Minion who arranged and typed this history on their word processor and were gracious to give of their time, talents and supplies.

Spearheading the whole Bicentennial Celebration, working wherever needed, seeing that committees met, making history book arrangements, being an ex-officio member of all committees was our pastor the Rev. W. Clay Macaulay.

Those writing portions of the transcript were: Katherine Beard, Peggy McNeel, Virginia Kinnison, James K. and Annie Rock, Wilda Chappell, Wilmer Ruckman, W. Clay Macaulay, Elma and Moffett McNeel Jr.

Comprising the History Committee were Moffett McNeel Jr. Chairman, Virginia Kinnison, W. Sherman Beard, James K. and Annie Rock, Lanty F. McNeel, Virginia Callison, Katherine Beard and Hubert Lewis.

We were unable to locate a picture of the early Brick Church, so from descriptions, Phyllis Crickenberger drew an artist's rendition of what we imagine it to have been.

We express our thanks to John Walkup for his photographic contributions. We also thank Linda Simmons, Hubert Callison, and Billy Newcomb.

Program Committee: Wilda Chappell, Chairman, Linda Simmons, Phyllis Crickenberger, James K. Rock, Sally Nottingham, Sue Hollandsworth and Thomas VanReenen.

Music Committee: Mary Alice Beard, Chairman, James Fleming, Linda VanReenan and Mabel (Peggy) McNeel.



Food Committee: Louise McNeel, Chairman, Edna Moore,  
Linda VanKesteren.

Growing Committee: Nora Lee Workman, Chairman.

Housekeeping: Elma McNeel, Chairman, and Karen McNeel.

Grassroots: Jan Hollanderworth, Chairman, Helen Fleming, Sam  
McNeel and Donald McNeel.

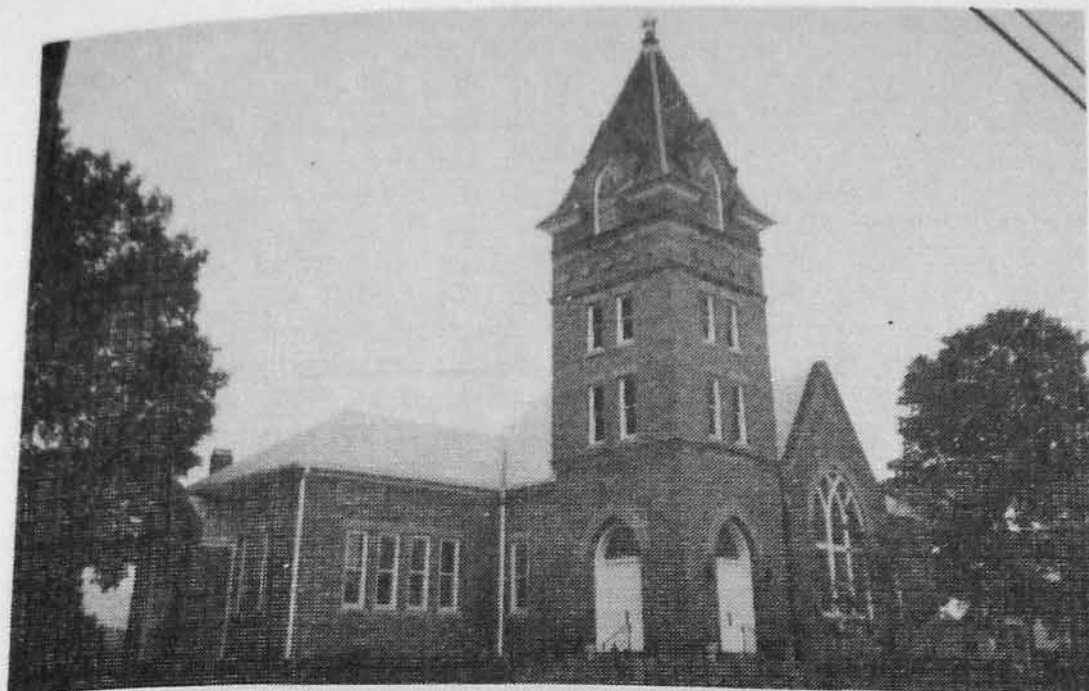
Marketing: Louise McNeel, Chairman, Virginia Kinnison and  
Sam McNeel.

Patrons: Sally Nottingham, Chairman, and Phyllis Cricken-  
berger.

Finance: Sherman Board, Chairman, and Donald Sharp.

Program: Marlen McNeel Jr., Chairman, and Annie Koch.

Recreational Committee: Thomas VanKesteren, Chairman.



## **HISTORY OF OAK GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HILLSBORO, WEST VIRGINIA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**COLONIAL BACKGROUND** — The colonial background of Oak Grove Church has given to its families and members a splendid cultural and religious heritage. Dr. William T. Price, in his "History of Pocahontas County", says: "The adherents of Presbyterianism in the limits of Greenbrier Presbytery are the descendants to a large extent of those Scotch and Scotch-Irish people who occupied this region at an early day. Most of these persons had settled in Pennsylvania." About the year 1740, and in succeeding years, many of the Scotch-Irish moved down from central and western Pennsylvania, settling in the Valley of Virginia. Almost immediately they began setting up and organizing Presbyterian Churches. Among the earliest was the Augusta Stone Church at Fort Defiance, organized in 1741, and from which came some of the earliest settlers into what is the Little Levels section of Pocahontas County. About the middle of the Eighteenth Century there were two influences that helped to push many of the Scotch-Irish across the Allegheny Mountains into what is now Greenbrier Valley. One is the fact that in eastern Virginia there was much religious intolerance so that Presbyterians and other non-conformists

groups in many cases were not permitted to have their own worship. The Scotch-Irish were therefore, glad to go westward in order that they might be able to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience. And the aristocratic people in the eastern part of the Commonwealth were quite willing to see them go. They would, they thought, be accomplishing two things: they would be getting rid of a troublesome element, and the tough, sturdy Scotch-Irish would be forming a barrier which would keep back the Indians from the eastern section of the country. There was another factor which soon helped to thrust settlers into the Little Levels, for in 1755 the English Colonists under General Braddock were disastrously defeated by the French and Indians in the campaign against Fort Duquesne. This struck such terror into the hearts of the people of western Pennsylvania that great caravans began moving southward, some going on into the Piedmont section of the Carolinas while many others stopped and settled in the Valley of Virginia. Within a few years when the Valley began to be somewhat thickly populated for that time, many pushed across the mountains and settled on the fertile lands of the Greenbrier. And one of the first and easiest places to reach in the Greenbrier was the Little Levels.

### **EARLY ANCESTRAL FAMILIES OF OAK GROVE CHURCH**

At the Oak Grove Centennial (later this date proved to be incorrect) celebration of 1931, this statement was carried in a historical paper prepared by Miss Minnie Wallace and Miss Maggie Ruckman and Mr. Matthew John McNeel: "Rev. John Craig D.D. was one of the most prominent Ministers of the Augusta Stone Church. He had the most influence upon the immediate ancestors of these persons who planted Presbyterianism in the counties of Pocahontas, Greenbrier, Monroe and Kanawha." We learn from Dr. Price's "History of Pocahontas County" that of the early families of Oak Grove Church, the Poages, Beards, and Wallaces came directly from the Augusta Stone Congregation which is little more than a hundred miles east of Hillsboro. Further to the north-east, from the region around Winchester, came the McNeels and Kinnisons.

**THE WHITE POLE (METHODIST) CHURCH** — From those and other Scotch-Irish families came the early members of both the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of Hillsboro community. There is ample reason to believe that the Methodist work is the oldest religious work in the Little Levels section. One of the best accounts of the White Pole Church is given in "Hardesty's Encyclopedia" (Pages 365 and 369). Here we learn that John McNeel, who came here (first settler in the Little Levels) in 1765, built the White Pole Church some time prior to the American Revolution. It stood where the McNeel Cemetery now is. Hardesty says: "Mr. McNeel remembered his duty



to his God, and with his own hands reared a small log cabin in which his neighbors and himself might worship Him who heareth the ravens when they cry, and who watcheth over the wanderer in the wilderness or the mariner upon the ocean. This temple dedicated by the builder to the Builder of the Universe, was called The White Pole Church, and was, in all probability, the first ever erected west of the Allegheny Mountains." Hardesty states further that in 1789 Bishop Ashbury of the Methodist Church, preached in the White Pole Church, and that in that year the first organization of the church was perfected. He then names the charter members as follows: "John McNeel, Martha McNeel, James Lewis and wife, Alexander Wadell and wife, Charles Kennison, Jacob Kennison, Mrs. James Brinnell, John Switzer and wife, Richard Hill, Nancy Hill, and Abraham McNeel and wife." In 1830 John Jordan gave a lot to the Methodist Congregation about a mile or more east of Hillsboro. There a house of worship had already been erected. This was used for a generation or two, and then the location was changed to its present site in Hillsboro. Thus, like that of the Presbyterians, the Methodist place of worship has, since 1789, been on several separate lots.

**EXACT DATE OF OAK GROVE ORGANIZATION NOT KNOWN** — We do not know the exact year Oak Grove Church was organized. We can, however, with definiteness trace certain movements which led to its constitutional establishment. From the records of the General Assembly and of Lexington Presbytery we can establish the fact that there was a Presbyterian Church in the Little Levels as early as 1788. Rev. John McCue is recognized as having been the first Presbyterian Minister to preach the Gospel in what is now the bounds of Oak Grove Church. There is good evidence to substantiate that belief. In May 1782, Hanover Presbytery, meeting in the Timber Ridge Church, licensed John McCue, and instructed him to labor during the following year in Greenbrier County. A year later, May 20, 1783, McCue preached his ordination sermon in the Monmouth Church near Lexington, and Presbytery made arrangements for his ordination to take place on the first Wednesday of August following. Accordingly, the Commission appointed by Hanover Presbytery went to Greenbrier County in August 1783. First, it organized Old Stone Church in Lewisburg, (West) Virginia, ordained McCue as a Minister of the Gospel, and installed him as pastor of the new church. The same commission proceeded to Union, and organized that church. In the fall of the same year Spring Creek Church at Renick was organized, and McCue served all three churches in his pastorate. From The Church of the Western Waters by Dr. Lloyd Courtney, is this statement: "He (McCue) was probably the first to administer the sealing ordinances in the Sinks of Monroe County, the Levels of Pocahontas County, on the Head of Greenbrier, and in Tygart's Valley." Lexington Presbytery was set off from Hanover in 1786. The first documentary reference to the Little Levels Church is in Volume I, Minutes of Lexington Presbytery, October 21, 1788, and contains this

order in the action of Presbytery: "Mr. John McCue is appointed to preach one Sabbath in the Sinks of Greenbrier, another in the Little Levels, and catechise both." Lexington Presbytery, meeting on April 16, 1789, ordered Mr. John Montgomery and Mr. McCue to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the Levels. In the meeting of Lexington Presbytery May 2, 1791, "Mr. Lyle is appointed to supply between this and our next, one Sabbath at the Little Levels." Other appointments by Lexington Presbytery were: "April 26, 1793 Mr. Wilson, one Sabbath to the Little Levels," and "Mr. Bannels one Sabbath to the Little Levels."

**VISIT OF DR. WILLIAM HILL** — The Cornerstone of Oak Grove Church bears the date of "1793." This is due to an erroneous notation in the early Sessional Records which says that "The Rev. William Hill of Winchester Presbytery, made a visit to the Little Levels region in 1793 and organized a Church there." From other documents and sources, we learn that Oak Grove Church is older than that by at least five years. Dr. Hill had a long ministerial career from 1790 to 1852. He graduated from Hampden Sydney College in 1788, and studied theology under the College President John Blair Smith. He was licensed by Hanover Presbytery in 1790, and served in Home Mission work under appointment by the Synod from 1790 to 1800. What is likely, is that Dr. Hill in 1793 visited the Little Levels Congregation as a missionary or evangelist very much as John McCue had been doing in previous years, and preached to a congregation already organized as a church, but perhaps inspiring it with new life and vigor.

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** — The General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church In The United States of America was organized May 21st-25th, 1789. On page 14, Minutes of this first meeting of the Assembly is this statement: "As it may be desirable to record in this place the state of the Presbyterian Church at the time of the organization of the General Assembly, we insert the following statistics prepared in the preceding year, and published by order of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia." Then follows a table of the enrolled ministers and churches, the arrangement being according to Presbyteries. Page 19 gives a list of the ministers and churches in Lexington Presbytery, and The Little Levels is there listed as a vacant church. We have already seen that Lexington Presbytery in its own Minutes in the year 1788 had the Little Levels in its list of churches.

We have seen too, that from the most reliable data available, Rev. John McCue was probably the first Presbyterian Minister to preach in the Little Levels region. We noted that his pastorate in Lewisburg began in 1783. A part of his pastorate covered Spring Creek Church only eleven miles from Hillsboro. Thus, we can safely conclude that the Oak Grove or Little Levels Presbyterian Church must have been organized some time between the years of 1783 and 1788.

## MINISTERS WHO SERVED OAK GROVE CHURCH

From the fore-going facts, it is apparent that Oak Grove Church, for a long while in its earliest years, had no regular preaching services. Mrs. Rella Yeager, former member, very clearly said of Oak Grove Church: "For a period of thirty years after its organization it had neither pastors nor stated supplies, the only preaching being by ministers from distant fields who occasionally visited this region." Though the church in those years did not have the benefit of regular preaching services, yet from time to time it had revival services. These were some times conducted in the homes, and at other times under a brush arbor. A very notable revival occurred in the Oak Grove Congregation in the year 1801, and from Dr. Price's "History of Pocahontas County," we have the following account: "Visiting friends from Kentucky brought with them the revival spirit that has rendered the early history of Kentucky so famous, and it broke out in the Levels in 1801. Parties in Augusta heard of it and came over to see and hear what it all meant. The Pastor of the Augusta Stone Church, Rev. William Wilson, a relative of the Poages, and fifteen or twenty young people, also relatives, came over together. They became imbued with the spirit of the moment, and went back singing and praying as they travelled along. The effect upon the home people in the Valley as they rode up singing and praying was overwhelming, and from that point — the Old Augusta Stone Church — the revival influence went all over the State, where ever there were congregations, and the results are visible at the present time. So it appears that a great matter was kindled by a little watch fire that had been kindled in the old Poage homestead."

## MISSIONARIES OR EVANGELISTS

We have already mentioned ministers who occasionally preached here under appointment by Presbytery as missionaries or evangelists. Among them were John McCue, John Montgomery, Mr. Lyle, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Bannals, and Dr. William Hill. We have no record of other Presbyterian ministers preaching here until the time of Rev. John McElhenney, D.D., who began his ministry in Old Stone Church, Lewisburg, in 1808. By special appointment, he came occasionally to Hillsboro. Mrs. Yeager says of these visits: "Once a year he journeyed into Pocahontas County, administering the Sacrament at Oak Grove Church." In the Centennial Paper read here in 1931 is this notation: "When the Oak Grove Church was vacant, Dr. McElhenney would come up to preach and hold communion. One of his texts remembered by the old people was Jeremiah 22:29 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!' He exerted a great influence for good over the Oak Grove Church."

## STATED SUPPLIES

We come now to a period when Oak Grove Church began to be served by stated supplies, giving a definite portion of their time to this congregation.



First of these was the Rev. Samuel Graham, D.D., a native of Bedford County, Virginia. He was born February 9, 1794. He graduated from Washington College and from Princeton Theological Seminary. He was licensed in 1818, and for the next two years served here as stated supply, giving one third of his time to Oak Grove Church. In 1838 he became Professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, in Virginia, where he served till 1850, dying in 1851.

Rev. James Kerr came to this field in 1826, and according to Dr. Courtney, served Oak Grove until 1830. Outstanding in that service was the erection in 1828 of the "Brick Church" on a plot now enclosed in the Oak Grove Cemetery.

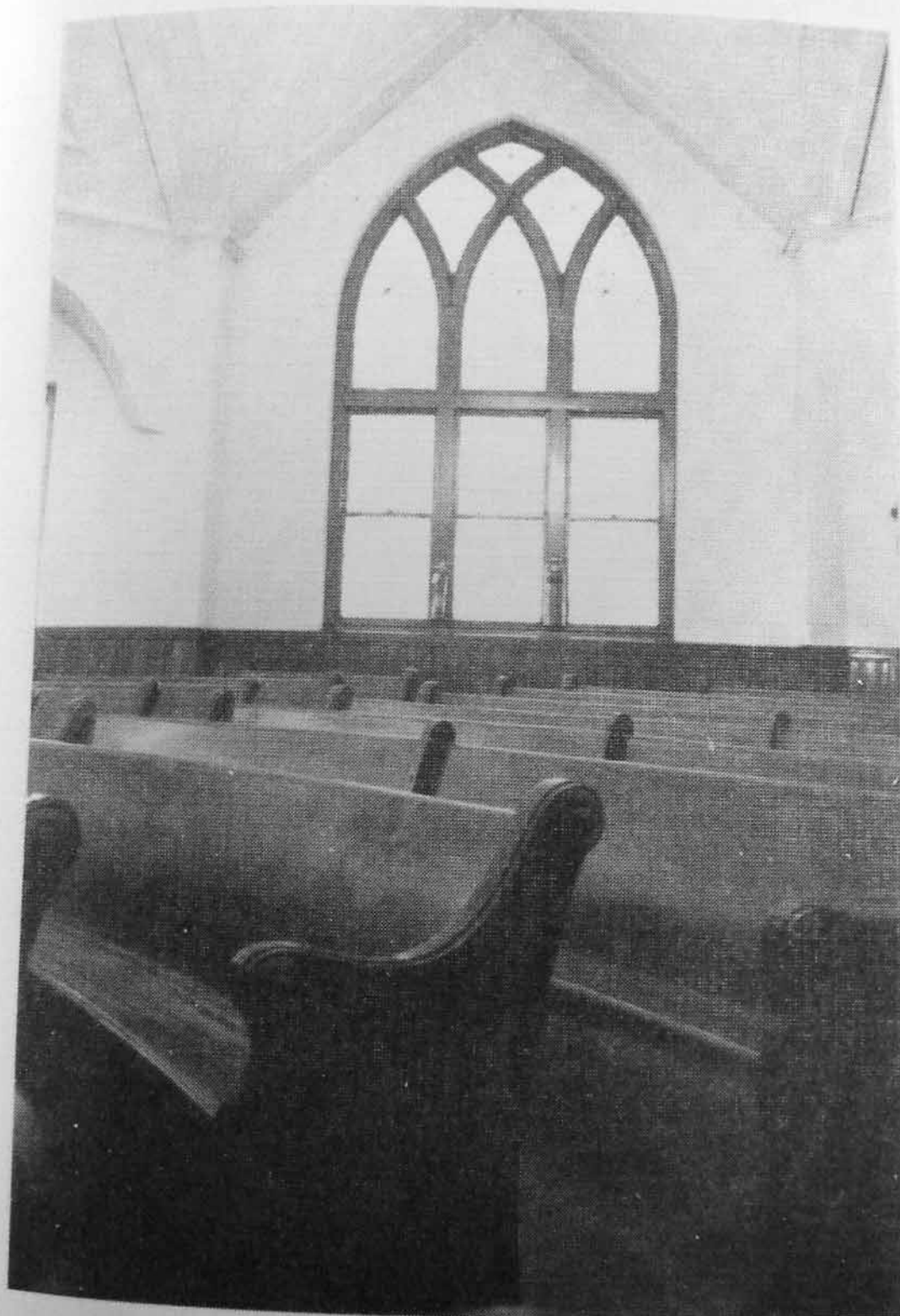
In the year in which Mr. Kerr's services closed, 1830, came one of the most important events in the whole life of this church. That was the re-establishment of the church's session by the Rev. Samuel L. Graham, who seems to have returned for a brief time. This is referred to in early Sessional Records as the church's re-organization. But there is no indication that Oak Grove Church had been dissolved by Presbytery, and no indication that it had passed out of existence. So, here is what seems to have been the situation: Col. William Poage, one of the founders of Oak Grove Church, and last of its original elders, died in April 1830. This left the church without any ruling elders. So, on August 28, 1830, by authority of the Presbytery, Rev. Samuel L. Graham re-instituted the Church's administrative functions. Work started anew with twelve members as follows: George Poage, Josiah Beard, John Jordan, William Bradshaw, Samuel D. Poage, William E. Hill, Martha Poage, E. Poage, M. Poage, Nancy Cackley, Jane Bradshaw, and Mrs. McDonald. The following were then elected Elders: Josiah Beard, John Jordan, George Poage, and Samuel D. Poage.

Rev. William Graham Campbell, a native of Rockbridge County, Virginia, became stated supply here in the latter part of 1830. A sessional record of July 2, 1831 says: "Rev. William G. Campbell commenced his labors as Stated Supply for one half his time, for one year, September previous." Another minute says, "The Rev. W. G. Campbell continued his ministerial labors, one fourth part of his time for the second year ending September 1832." During this time he also served Spring Creek and Anthony's Creek Churches. He was a man of great ability and zeal as an evangelist, receiving one hundred members at Anthony's Creek, eighty-seven at Spring Creek, and twenty-nine in the Oak Grove Church.

Professor Henry Ruffner served here as stated supply in 1833, and during that year the membership reached a total of forty seven. He had been a student under Dr. McElhenney at Lewisburg. In 1819 he had organized the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston, West Virginia. He became a great educator, and for ten or twelve years was President of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University).

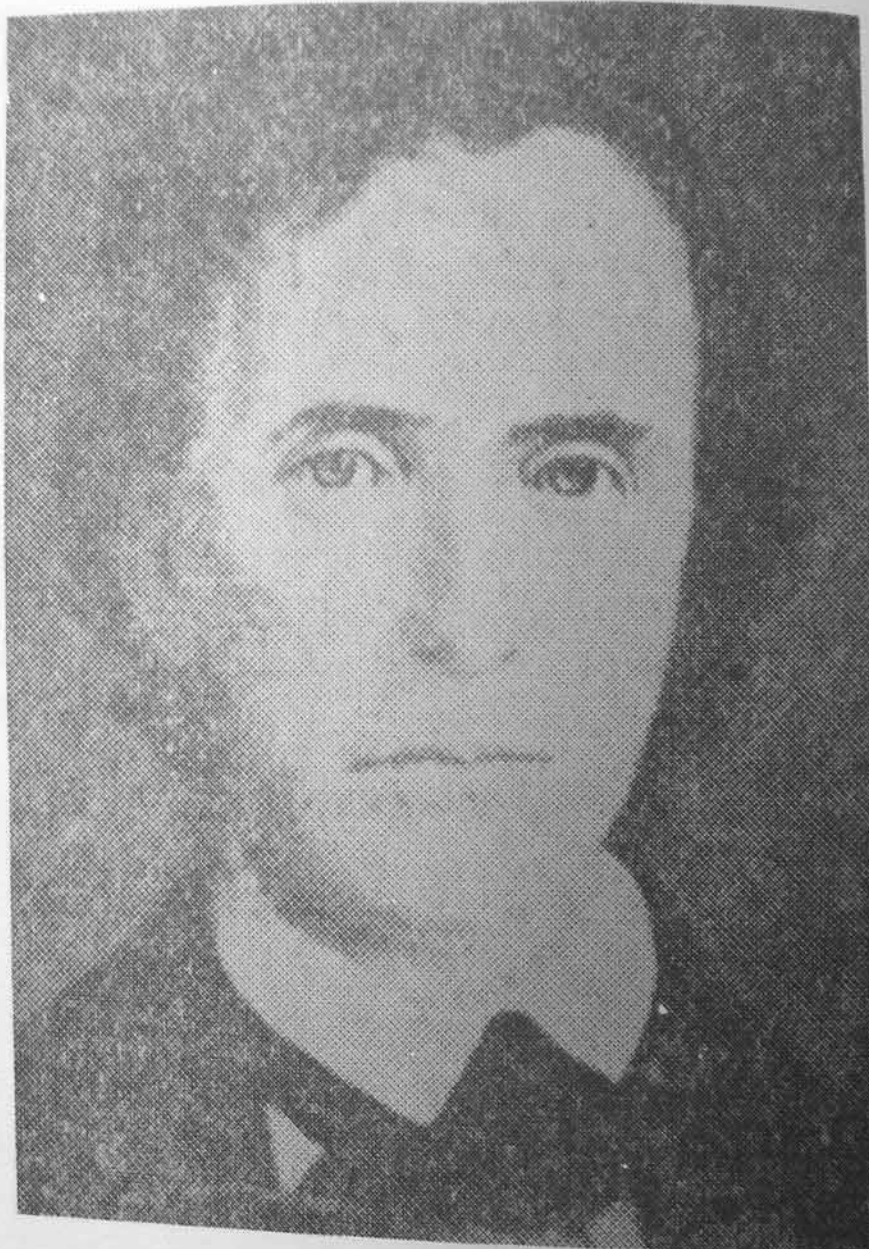
Rev. John Stephen Blain, a native of Rockingham County, Virginia, in September 1833 "Commenced his ministerial labors for one third part of his time for one year." The church continued substantial progress.

Rev. David H. Cunningham also of Rockingham county, was the next stated supply. He served this church as a licensed preacher, giving Oak Grove one third of his time for one year, beginning October 1834.



## PASTORS

From 1788-1818, a period of thirty years, Oak Grove Church had neither pastor nor stated supply, but preaching occasionally by appointment of Presbytery. For the next nineteen years, 1818-1837, the church was served by stated supplies. But in 1837 Oak Grove Church entered into a period of substantial character and program of work, for in that year it called its first pastor.



### REV. JOSEPH BROWN — 1837-1844

The first pastor of Oak Grove Church was Rev. Joseph Brown. His brother, Rev. William Brown was at that time pastor of the Augusta Stone Church. The sessional records of September 1837 contain this notation: "Rev. William Brown moderated a call of the Oak Grove Church to the Rev. Joseph Brown to become their pastor for one half his time at \$200.000 per annum, which call was unanimous. By the vote of this church the elders subscribed the call." Also

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"Saturday previous to the second Sabbath in September Rev. Joseph Brown was installed pastor of this church by Rev. David Cunningham." Mr. Brown was born in the manse of the New Providence Church, the son of Rev. Samuel and Mary Moore Brown. His mother, Mary Moore, was a niece of Col. William Poage, and in girlhood was a captive among the Indians. Her history and religious experiences are given in an interesting little volume "The Captives of Abb's Valley." Joseph Brown graduated from Washington College and Princeton Seminary, and was ordained by Lexington Presbytery. He is credited with being the founder of The Little Levels (Pocahontas) Academy. In 1843 he laid out plans for the town of Hillsboro. His pastorate continued in Oak Grove Church until 1844, and at Spring Creek Church until 1847. "The Presbyterian Encyclopedia" paid this tribute to his high character and work: "He accepted September 7, 1837 calls from the town churches, Spring Creek and Oak Grove, and was soon after installed as pastor. Here he labored faithfully and successfully until the pastoral relations were dissolved. This was his first and only pastorate . . . From a child Mr. Brown was Godly, devout, spiritually minded, self-sacrificing, ever anxious to benefit those around him. He was clear in his convictions, sound in the faith, and a thorough going Presbyterian, candid, open hearted, amiable, affectionate, generous, industrious, energetic, beloved by all who knew him."

#### **REV. MITCHELL D. DUNLAP — 1844-1868**

Was the second pastor of this church. He came to this field immediately after graduation from the Seminary in 1844, and served two years as a licensed preacher. In 1846 he was ordained, and served Oak Grove as stated supply for twelve years. In 1859 he was called by congregational action as the regular pastor for one half his time at \$200.00 per year. He continued in the service of this church until 1868, when, upon his resignation, the pastoral relation was dissolved. After his retirement from the pastorate, he continued to make his home in Hillsboro or Academy as the post office then was, until his death in 1891. He was buried in Monroe County.

#### **REV GEORGE L. BROWN**

Served as stated supply for one half his time during the interval 1868-1872.

#### **REV. DAVID SPOTTS SYDENSTRICKER, D.D. — 1875-1905**

The third minister was a man of outstanding ability and scholarship, Rev. David Spotts Sydenstricker who was born in Lewisburg in 1835. He attended Lewisburg Military Academy, and after service as a teacher, graduated from Union Theological Seminary, in Virginia in 1870. Following his ordination, he served the Churches of Richlands, Muddy Creek, and McElhenney. In 1872 the Session of Oak Grove Church employed him as stated supply for one year for one half his time, and in 1873 he accepted a church's call in Arkansas. Oak Grove then called Rev. Henry Gilmore of Lexington Presbytery. But owing to his church's unwillingness to release him, the call could not be suc-

cessfully prosecuted. In 1875 Oak Grove Church formally called Rev. Sydenstricker. Accepting the call, he returned from Arkansas, and gave this church its longest and one of its most fruitful pastorates. In 1891 Hampden Sydney College conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He was considered one of the best language scholars in the state of West Virginia, and was particularly learned in Greek and Hebrew. Resigning and retiring from the pastorate in 1905, he continued to make his home in Hillsboro until death in 1913. He was buried in the Marlinton Cemetery.



#### **REV. AND MRS. JACOB COART JOHNSON — 1905-1928**

Was the church's fourth pastor. He was born in Pamlico County, North Carolina in 1865. Serving for a while as a teacher, he graduated from the University of North Carolina, and from Union Seminary in Virginia. Following his ordination in 1900, he served as pastor of McDowell and Williamsville in Virginia, and later of the church in Richwood, West Virginia. Oak Grove Church called him in 1905. His first wife, the former Anna Webster, died in 1906. He married Mary Edgar Beard on June 9, 1915 in Oak Grove Church. Their children were Jacob Lee, Mary Emma, Anna Margaret (Langford) and Frederick Allen. He served Oak Grove until 1928, accepting in that year the pastorate of Covesville, Virginia, where he continued until 1940, dying in 1941. During Mr. Johnson's pastorate the boundaries of Oak Grove Church were greatly extended, outposts being established at Beard, Caesar Mountain, and Seebert. Good Sunday Schools were conducted in all these communities, the work of Seebert becoming a Union Program with the Methodist Protestant Church. Mr. Johnson also established regular preaching appointments in the two Methodist Churches — Marvin Chapel and Trinity Church on Stamp- ing Creek.

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**REV. AND MRS. MEADE R. ATKINSON — 1929-1932**

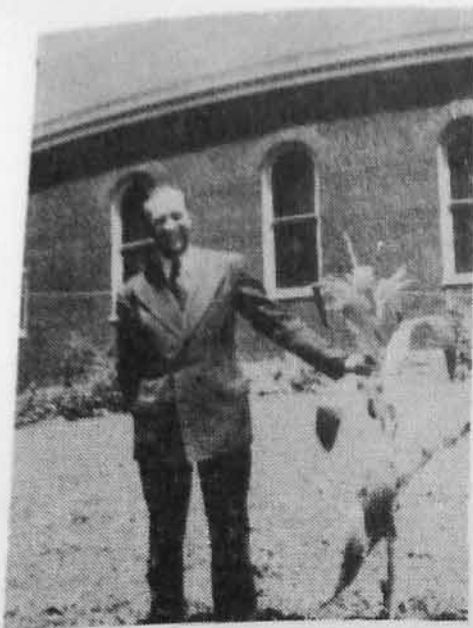
The fifth pastor was Meade Randolph Atkinson, who was born at Champe, Virginia in 1905. A graduate of Hampden Sydney College and of Union Seminary, Virginia, he came to this, his first pastorate in the early summer of 1929, and on July 30th was ordained. He accepted in 1932 a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Logan, West Virginia. In 1941 Davis and Elkins College conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He died October 13, 1987 in McKenny, Virginia.





**REV. AND MRS. MARLIN BEAMER CURRY — 1932-1936**

He was born in 1904 at Pickaway, West Virginia. He was the sixth pastor. A graduate of Davis & Elkins College and of Union Seminary, he accepted Oak Grove's call and was ordained here October 9, 1932. Here he served until 1936, accepting in that year a call as associate pastor of Old Stone Church in Lewisburg. From 1938 to 1942 he was pastor of the Northfork and Vivian churches, and was a chaplain in the United States Army during World War II and again from 1955-58. From 1946-1955 he served churches in Burlington, N.C. and Farmville, Virginia. He retired July 19, 1960 and died on June 9, 1961.



**REV. AND MRS. JOSEPH EARL KNIGHT — 1936-1940**

Was born in Jonesboro, Tennessee in 1899. He was a graduate of King College and Louisville Seminary. After serving Oak Hill Church, and the Beckley Community Church as stated supply and evangelist, he became the seventh pastor of Oak Grove Church in 1936, serving here until 1940. In that year he accepted the pastorate of the Bradstown Church in Kentucky. During Mr. Knight's pastorate the membership of Oak Grove Church went to more than two hundred for the first time in its history. He died October 31, 1957.

**REV. SAMUEL WILLIAMS MOORE, D.D. — 1940**

Dr. Moore was a native of North Carolina, and for many years the able and beloved pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Bluefield, West Virginia, served Oak Grove Church during the summer and fall of 1940 as stated supply. He was honorably retired in 1941. The outstanding personality and ability of Dr. Moore inspired this congregation with a new spirit of interest. Prevented by impaired health from assuming regular pastoral duties, he served as stated supply of Fort Pierce Church in Florida each winter. He died September 29, 1954.

**REV. AND MRS. JOHN KERR FLEMING — 1940-1948**

Rev. Fleming was born at Elmwood, North Carolina in 1892. He attended Davidson College. In World War I he served with The American Expeditionary Forces in the 155th Infantry. Graduating from Union Seminary in Virginia, in 1922, he has since served in the following pastorates: Acme, N.C., Gilbert, West Virginia, First Presbyterian Church of Thomasville, N.C., and Flat Rock Church, Mount Airy, N.C. He accepted Oak Grove's call as its eighth pastor in 1940, and served here for eight years, going in 1948 to Hedgesville,



**Rev. and Mrs. John Kerr Fleming**

West Virginia, where he became the pastor of Falling Waters, Hedgesville, and Tomahawk Churches.

He served two other churches before retirement in 1961 and one church after his retirement.

In June of 1922 he married the former Retha Flowers. Their children are Ruth Fleming Thompson and John K. Fleming Jr. Mrs. Retha Fleming died in 1971. In 1975 he then married Sue Cowan Sneed.

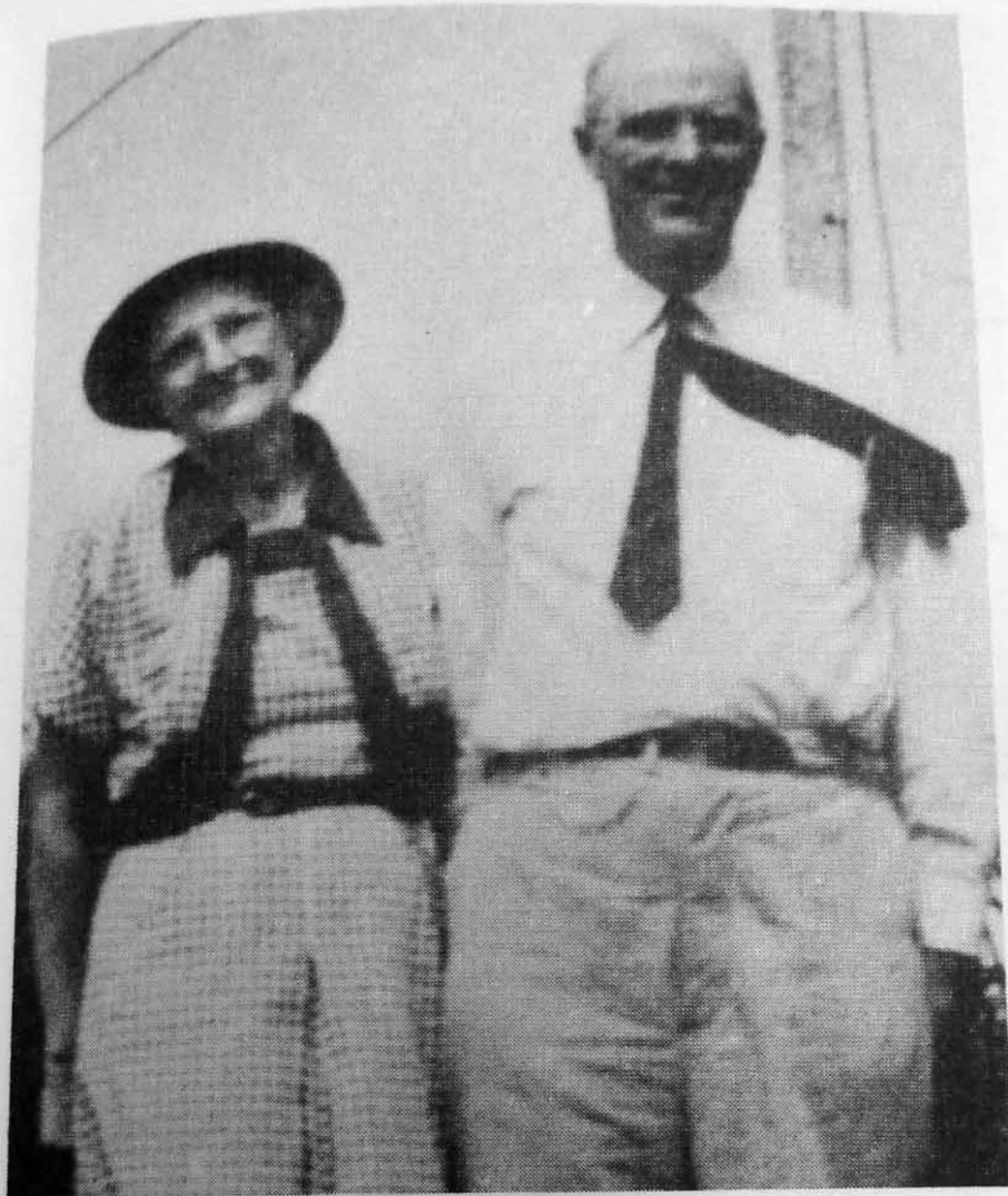
Mr. Fleming was a tireless historian. He showed that in his conversation and sermons. He wrote five histories; among which was the "History of Oak Grove Church" published in 1950, on which this history is based.

He tirelessly worked on many projects while pastor here, including: Visitation Evangelism, Founder of The Lord's Acre Plan, Hammond Electric Organ Fund, outdoor bulletin board, new roof on church, choir entry addition, manse insulation and sanctuary replastered.

In addition to serving in armed forces in WWI he held services of jubilation at the end of WWII. In 1945 the following services were held. May 13, Victory in Europe, May 27, American Legion Memorial Service, October 19, Victory in Japan, October 21, Navy Day.

Mr. Fleming died in January 1986.

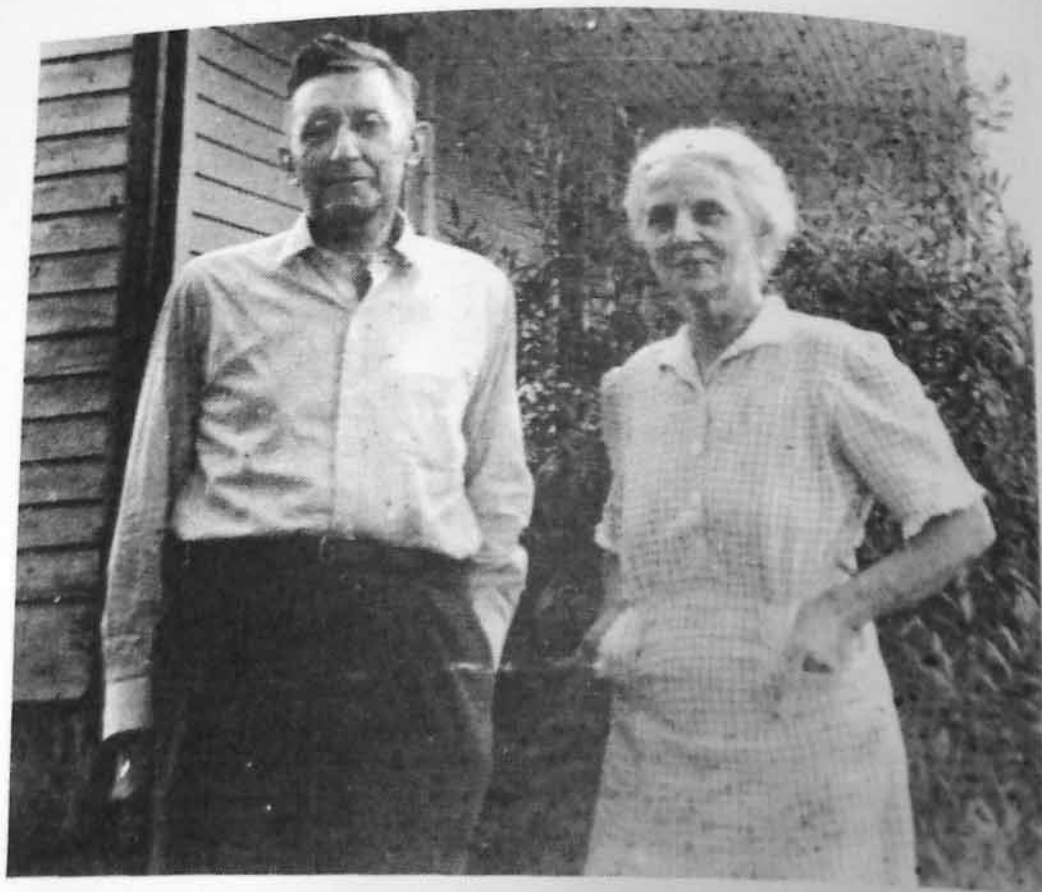




#### **REV. AND MRS. DRURY LACY JONES — 1949-1952**

Rev. Jones was born in Fairfield, Virginia, May 4, 1889. A graduate of Fredericksburg College, Union Seminary in Richmond and of Princeton Seminary. He was ordained by King's Mountain Presbytery in 1915. He served six churches in North Carolina prior to his call to Oak Grove, May 1, 1949, and served the church faithfully as its ninth pastor until September 21, 1952. His wife was the former Juanita Puett (married August 16, 1939). They had one daughter, Juanita Lacy.

Retiring in 1963 after two more pastorates, he died September 7, 1973. Mrs. Jones died in 1987. The year end statistical report, March 31, 1952, shows 186 members on church roll with Rev. Jones being paid \$2,800 per year out of a \$6,183 budget.



**REV. AND MRS. ROGER BACON GARDIEN, JR. — 1952-1955**

Was born in Atlanta, Ga., October 29, 1889. He graduated from Georgia Tech in 1913, Columbia Seminary in 1918 and was ordained in North Alabama Presbytery, October 12, 1919, after doing post graduate work in Birmingham South College. He served as stated supply of four different churches in Alabama, Kentucky and Texas until 1928. He then served two pastorates in Alabama and one in Kentucky. He came to Oak Grove, December 1952 as the tenth pastor where he served until January 16, 1955, the date he died after becoming ill with cancer.

He married the former Phamie Brown in 1932, and they had no children. She maintained her church membership here until her death in July 1986 at age 97.

Mr. Gardien was a dedicated, sincere person. After his cancer operation in Lexington, Kentucky, he returned to his pulpit, sometimes only able to preach while sitting down. The Baptismal Font which was presented to Oak Grove in his memory by Mrs. Gardien and his niece, Mary Evans was dedicated July 31, 1966.



**REV. AND MRS. COLLIER SMITH HARVEY, JR. — 1955-1959**

He was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, March 20, 1929. He graduated from Hampden Sydney College in 1950, Union Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity Degree in 1953. He then became assistant pastor of Tinkling Springs, Fishersville and Hermitage, at Waynesboro, Virginia. He was ordained in Lexington Presbytery July 21, 1954. Returning to Union Theological Seminary he did post graduate work for one year, 1954-1955. Later he received an honorary D.D. from King College in 1966. Upon completion of Seminary he accepted a call and came to Oak Grove July 1, 1955 as the eleventh pastor where he served until April 30, 1959.

After moving to Kingsport, Tennessee in 1959 until 1966, he served two other church pastorates in Virginia before accepting his present position as Executive Presbyter of Fincastle Presbytery.



Mr. Harvey married Betty Ann McFadden, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister from Tupelo, Mississippi on August 20, 1954. They have four daughters, Ann Gray, Virginia Ellen, Lois Jane, and Mary Collier. The two older children were born while they were in Hillsboro.

During his pastorate much needed repair was done at the manse: installing an oil furnace, storm windows, and insulation.

Mr. Harvey worked diligently with outposts which at that time were Beard Chapel, Caesar Mountain and Marvin Chapel. Each had a circle in that area along with two circles at Oak Grove. Bible schools were held at Beard (attendance not recorded), Oak Grove had an attendance of 60 and Caesar Mountain, 35.

Mr. Harvey was dedicated to the youth, he being the one to start children's sermons during morning worship.



#### **REV. AND MRS. JOHN IRVING PRATHER — 1959-1964**

Rev. Prather was born in Lexington, Kentucky, August 14, 1910. He graduated from The University of Kentucky in 1931. He was in the grocery business and an instructor at the University of Kentucky and Lee's Junior College. He attended the Princeton Theological Seminary 1943 to 1946 and was ordained by Presbyterian Church U.S.A. July 8, 1946. After serving churches in New Jersey he moved back to the Presbyterian Church U.S. in 1957, accepting a call to Oak Grove as the twelfth pastor. He served here from October 1, 1959 until May 31, 1964. After serving two churches in Farmville, Virginia, he retired January 22, 1972. Rev. Prather died February 23, 1974.

His wife was the former Alice May Durling from New Rochelle, N.Y. They were married May 24, 1935. Their children are Irvine Durling and Patricia Bourne.

Among other things he was well known for his thoroughness in communicants class. Also, his penmanship was outstanding.



**REV. AND MRS. HARRY DUVAL PAINTER — 1964-1967**

Rev. Painter was born in Lewisburg, W. Va., June 23, 1902. After attending Roanoke College, Maryville College and Union Theological Seminary, he dropped out in 1927 for 30 years. He then returned, graduating in 1959 and was ordained that same year by Winchester Presbytery. He was Pastor at Springfield, W. Va. from 1959 to 1960. Pastor at Amelia, Virginia from 1960 to 1964. He served Oak Grove Church from August 1964 until September 15, 1967. After serving Hat Creek, Brookneal, Virginia, and Gladys, Diamond Hill, Va.

from 1967 to 1975, he retired July 1, 1975. Later he moved to Rose Hill, Virginia and supplied a church there.

He was in road construction the 30 years before he returned to seminary. Also, he was an excellent craftsman in repairing clocks, organs and engines, making the parts that he needed.

Mr. Painter married the former Helen Robinson. They had two daughters, Elizabeth Ann (Mrs. A. L. Spalone) and Helen Robinson (Mrs. James Mitchell).

Rev. Painter died March 9, 1988. His wife died May 25, 1988.

Mr. Painter taught the first Vacation Bible School adult class. The school was held at night so more could attend.



#### **REV. AND MRS. CECIL VINTON DALTON — 1967-1973**

Rev. Dalton was born May 23, 1918 at Hillsville, Virginia. He attended Hampden Sydney College, Montreat Anderson Jr. College, Alabama Polytechnical Institute (now Auburn University), graduating from Columbia Theological Seminary in 1964. He was ordained August 30, 1964 by Abingdon Presbytery. He served as a retail merchant in Hillsville for many years. Saying he "couldn't hide from God any longer," he finished Seminary and started his ministry in 1964. He also served 3 years 10 months in the army during WWII.

Rev. Dalton served one pastorate of two churches in Bland, Virginia, 1964-1967. He was called to Oak Grove as fourteenth pastor and began service December 12, 1967, leaving June 12, 1973 to go to Appomattox Court House, Appomattox, Virginia.

He was married in 1944 to the former Virginia Elizabeth Goad. Children are Robert Paul, Nancy Cecil (Mrs. A. L. Newberry), Janice Jett and Teresa Elsie.

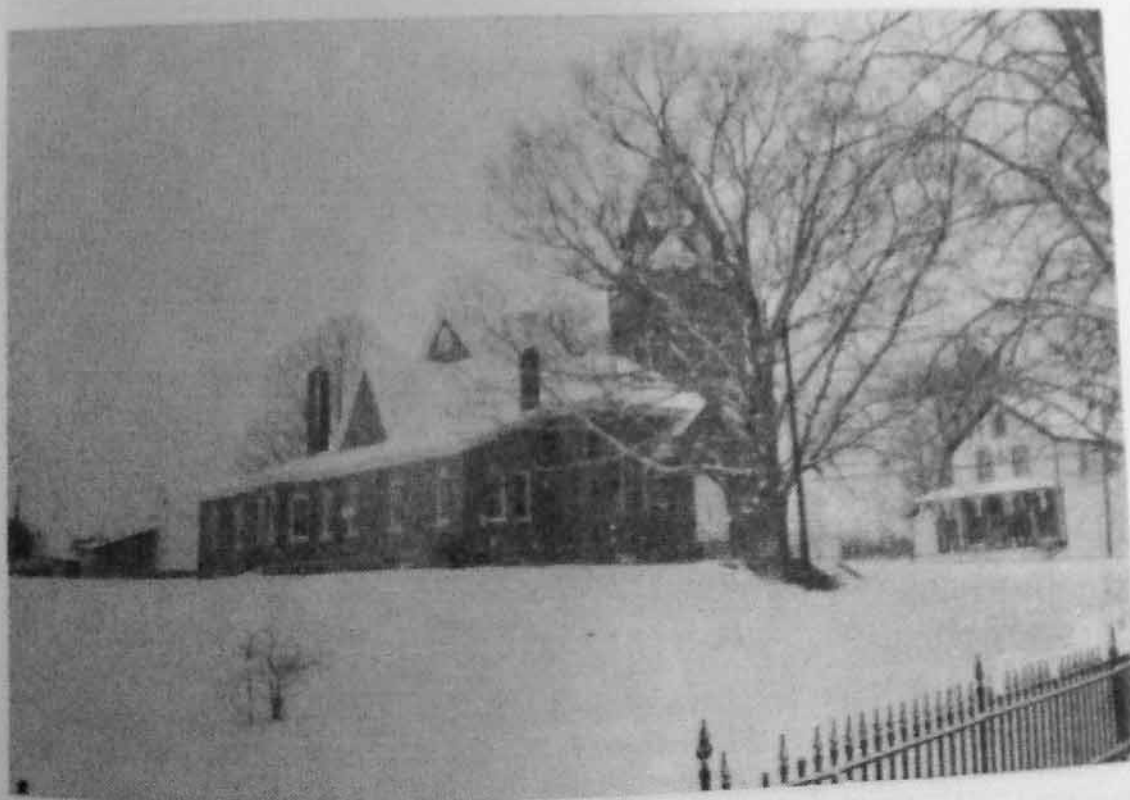
Mr. Dalton served less than four years at Appomattox before he



died suddenly on March 27, 1977 of a heart attack. Mrs. Dalton also died suddenly on September first of the same year.

A great accomplishment was reached during his ministry. Oak Grove had received Home Mission Aid since 1955 to pay a part of pastor's salary. In 1969 the church became self supporting under the leadership of Cecil Dalton. He worked diligently with the youth and young people. He preached every Sunday but the 3rd Sunday at Beard Chapel. That Sunday he preached at Marvin Chapel, also every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. at Oak Grove. While here the present brick bulletin board was built to replace an older one. Rev. Dalton served as chaplain to Denmar State Hospital, preaching there every Sunday at 2:00 p.m. Also with the help of the ministerial association he served communion to those willing to receive. He also started circle visitation with patients at Denmar State Hospital for the chronically ill on Wednesday afternoon.

The safe used for records in the church was originally used by him in his Hillsville, Virginia store.





**REV. AND MRS. JOHN "JACK" DAVIES ARBUCKLE  
1974-1983**

Rev. Arbuckle was born November 19, 1912 in Lewisburg, West Virginia. He graduated from Hampden Sydney College in 1934, Louisville Seminary in 1938 and was ordained August 7, 1938 by Lexington Ebenezer Presbytery. Having served four pastorates in Kentucky by 1947, he then came to Mt. Pleasant Church in Sinks Grove, West Virginia from 1947-1953. He served Upper Pocahontas churches living in Greenbank from 1953 to 1956. He then served as executive secretary of Greenbrier Presbytery for 12 years, living near Maxwellton at his home place. He served then in Damascus, Virginia and

Renick, Frankford and Auto churches before his call to Oak Grove November 24, 1984 as the fifteenth pastor. On November 13, 1983 he was honorably retired by a commission from Greenbrier Presbytery holding service in Oak Grove Church.

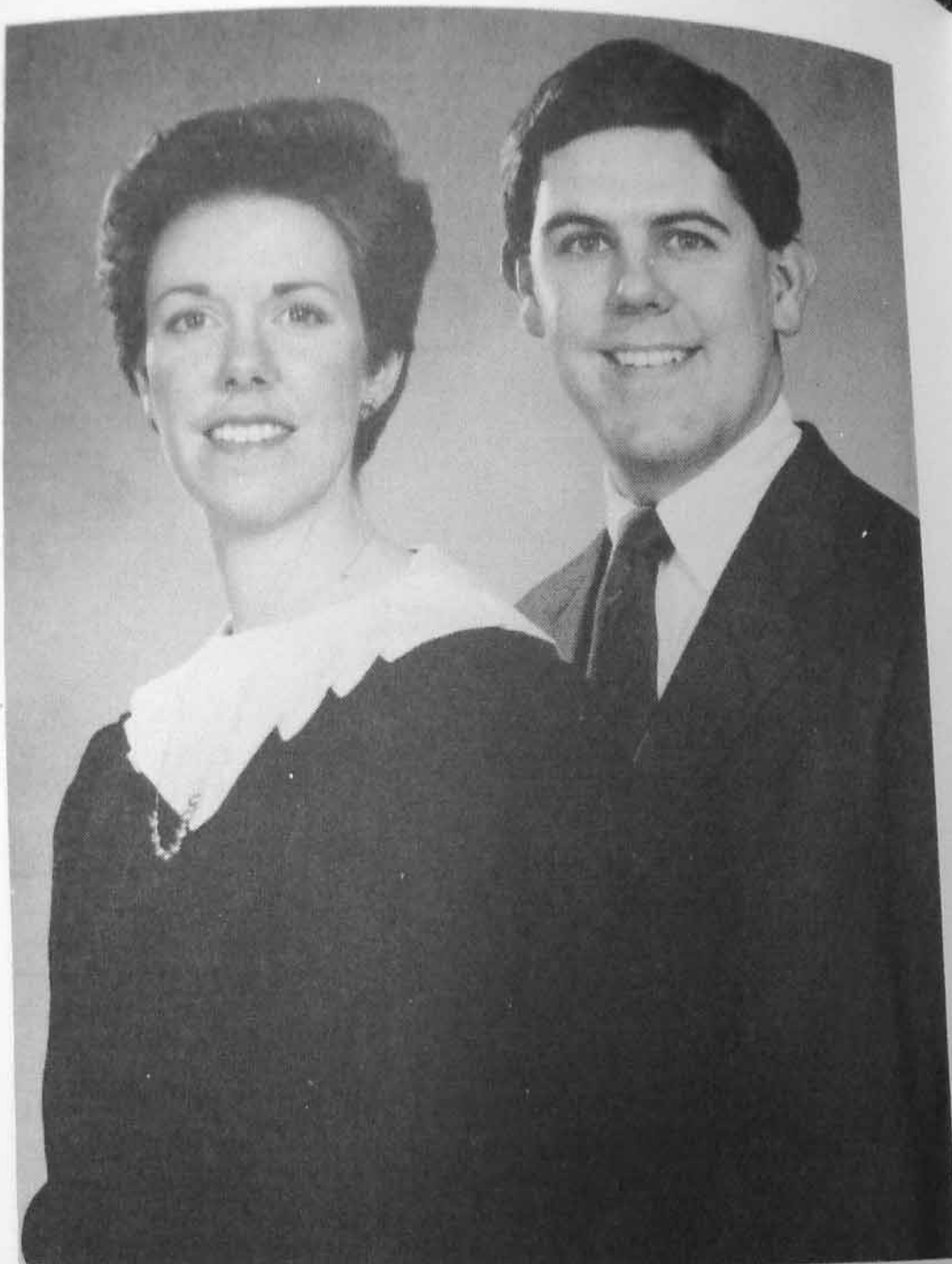
His wife and beloved companion was the former Mattie Winlock Harrison. Their daughters are Carolyn Winlock Arbuckle and Margaret Price Arbuckle Pauley. They have three granddaughters.

Under his leadership a young adult Sunday School class was organized, working many more people into Christian education. For many years Jack and Mattie worshiped occasionally in Oak Grove so people knew and loved them even before they served here.

Mrs. Arbuckle was very active accompanying him in pastoral visits, teaching adults in Sunday School and singing in church choir. Also, she was granted an honorary life membership in the Women of the Church.







**REV. AND MRS. WILTON CLAY MACAULAY — 1985-**

Rev. Macaulay was born October 16, 1958, the son of a Presbyterian minister. He was reared in Asheboro, N.C., graduating from Davidson College with a Bachelor's degree in 1981. In 1985 he graduated from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia.

The pastor nominating committee visited the seminary prior to his graduation and met him. They felt that it was love at first sight. After much prayerful consideration he accepted the call and began his pastorate as sixteenth minister on July 1, 1985.

He was ordained by Greenbrier Presbytery September 8, 1985 in

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Oak Grove Church with his father, the Rev. Wilkes Macaulay, preaching the sermon.

On May 29, 1983, he married Pamela Akehurst Moses. She graduated from The Presbyterian School of Christian Education.

Since the time he became pastor and leader, the church has been reaching out in the community to help, setting up the Oak Grove Emergency Assistance Fund to meet the needs of local people. Also, the church hosted work camps to repair and make livable houses in the community.

The Macaulays are the caring parents of Alexander Clay Macaulay. When Alec was born, Clay rang the church bell 30 times and planted a tree in the manse yard to celebrate Alec's birth.

## OFFICERS OF OAK GROVE CHURCH

### RULING ELDERS

A study of the sessional records reveals that in all generations of this church's history, men and later women of high character, ability, and commanding influence have been elected Elders. For the most part, they were faithful in attending meetings of the session. A goodly number have given commendable response in attending upon meetings of Synod and Presbytery when elected by the session to those bodies. In 1945 and 1955, J. Moffett McNeel, Sr. was commissioner to the Presbyterian Church's highest governing body, the General Assembly, held then in Montreat, N.C. In 1970 J. Moffett McNeel, Jr. was elected to the General Assembly held in Memphis, Tenn. James K. Rock was also elected to this high governing body in 1979 in Kansas City, Mo.

Although once ordained an Elder, unless defrocked, always an Elder, it was not until 1975 that the rotary system was adopted. That meant when serving no more than six years they were ineligible for re-election for one year. In 1974 a nominating committee system was adopted for election of both Elders and Deacons.

**COL. WILLIAM POAGE** — great-grandfather of Dr. Henry W. McLaughlin, is the only one of the original elders of this church of whom we know anything. Son of John Poage and grandson of Robert Poage the pioneer, he was born near Staunton, Virginia, February 17, 1756, and in early life was a member of the Augusta Stone Church at Fort Defiance. In or near the year 1776 he married Margaret Davies, daughter of the noted pioneer minister Rev. Samuel Davies. To them were born fourteen children, two of the sons becoming elders in Oak Grove Church. William Poage Jr., was a major in the War of 1812. In

1782 Col. Poage moved to the Little Levels of Greenbrier (later Pocahontas) County. The earliest Presbyterian services in that community were held in his home. Obviously, when Oak Grove Church was organized, he was made a member of its first board of ruling elders. He, it was, who donated the land on which the "Brick Church" and Cemetery were located in 1828. Death came to him on April 7, 1830. And as we have seen, his death left Oak Grove Church without a ruling elder until elders were elected in August of the same year.

In that election the following elders were chosen: Josiah Beard, John Jordan, George Washington Poage, and Samuel Davies Poage. The two Poages, George W. and Samuel D., were sons of Col. William Poage. Following is a quotation from "History of Pocahontas County," by Dr. Wm. T. Price: "George W. Poage was a person of fine appearance. An evergreen prayer meeting was conducted at his house on silent Sabbath. He loved to wail with judicious care hymns and tunes that were sung by his Covenanting ancestry in Scotland — Samuel Davies Poage, youngest son of William Poage Sr., lived at the old homestead. He had been educated for the Presbyterian ministry, but declined through a sense of unworthiness. He was a faithful helper in prayer meetings led by his brother George." They both served as ruling elders until death. George died in 1855, and S. D. in 1869.

**JOHN JORDAN** — was an elder from 1830 until death in 1836. He was a native of Ireland. After settling here, he married Miriam McNeel, daughter of the pioneer John McNeel. In 1822 he served as the first Sheriff of Pocahontas County.

**JOSIAH BEARD** — son-in-law of Major William Poage, was an elder in Oak Grove Church from 1830 until his death in 1878. The Beard ancestors, like those of the Poages, came from the Augusta Stone Congregation near Staunton. Josiah was born in Renick's Valley and settled on Locust Creek, near what is now Beard, West Virginia. In 1822 he became the first Clerk of the County Court of Pocahontas. In 1842 he helped in founding of the Pocahontas Academy in Hillsboro. Dr. Price wrote of him: "Josiah Beard was a person of fine mind, had a good education which he improved upon by reading and reflection. Though gentle in his manners, he had a pronounced will of his own, being endowed with physical and moral courage to a marked degree, a rare combination. His practical wisdom and spotless integrity gave weight to his opinions. The tenor of his life was peaceful and his influence was for good morals and intelligent piety."

**WILLIAM F. SHANKLIN** — was elected and installed an elder here in 1856. He had been ordained in the Centerville Church in Greenville, from which in 1855 he came to Oak Grove by Certificate. As we have little to indicate the length of his service as an elder, it is believed that he moved to another community.

**COL. PAUL McNEEL** — was elected to the eldership in 1859. He was a man of large influence, and was a leading spirit in promoting



community improvement in civic and religious life. He helped found the Academy in 1842. In 1861 he was a member of the Virginia State Legislature. His death occurred in 1872. As there is no record of his ordination, it is possible that he declined the office of elder when elected.

**COL. ROBERT G. MILLER** — was made an elder in 1859, but how long he served we do not know.

**DR. GEORGE MOFFETT** — was elected an elder in 1859, but seems to have lived only a few years after his ordination.

**SHERMAN H. CLARK** — was elected in 1859. He was a native of New England, and after moving to Hillsboro became one of the leading farmers in Pocahontas County. He served as an elder of Oak Grove Church forty-three years, dying in 1901. He was a man of large influence and usefulness both in the church and other public affairs.

Dr. Matthew Wallace and Edwin Beard were elected to the eldership in 1868. **EDWIN BEARD** — son of Josiah Beard, was an elder forty-two years, moving in 1908 to Culpepper, Virginia.

**DR. WALLACE** — gave active service for twenty-nine years, or until death in 1897.

Three elders were elected in 1881: John Hansel, William T. Beard, and Matthew John McNeel.

**JOHN HANSEL** — moved here from Highland County, Virginia. After a few years he moved to Rockbridge County. His son Ernest Hansel is a Presbyterian minister.

**WILLIAM T. BEARD** — son of Josiah Beard, was an elder here twenty-four years, dying in 1905.

In Oak Grove's entire history of more than a hundred and fifty years, one of its most influential elders was **MATTHEW JOHN McNEEL**. As a loyal Southerner he followed Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson in the Confederate Army. He was regular in attendance upon meetings of the session, and of Presbytery and Synod when elected to those bodies, was active in the work of the Sunday School, a strong supporter and promoter of the Church's outpost work, and in fact, was definitely interested in the whole program of the Church. In his will he left to Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, "The Margaret Bell McNeel Endowment Scholarship," a gift of ten thousand dollars to help young men in their education for the gospel ministry. He died in 1938 at the age of ninety-seven. To him goes the honor of having the longest term of service as an elder in this church. He served Oak Grove Church fifty-seven years as a ruling elder.

Allen R. Kinnison and Matthew Ruckman became elders in Oak Grove Church in 1897. Mr. Kinnison — a descendant of the pioneer Jacob Kinnison, served as an elder until 1907, transferring in that year to the Second Presbyterian Church of Norfolk, Virginia.

**MR. RUCKMAN** — was a faithful Presbyterian, and much interested in the work of the Sunday School. His death occurred in 1911. Thomas A. Sydenstricker and E. H. Moore were elected in 1903.

**MR. SYDENSTRICKER** — a nephew of Dr. D. S.

Sydenstricker, was Clerk of the Session from 1913 to 1918, moving about that time to Greenbrier County.

**MR. MOORE** — son of a Methodist Minister, came to this church by certificate in 1897. After teaching for a number of years, he engaged in farming and other business. He was an active elder until about 1920, when he moved to Florida for the benefit of his health. He died in Charleston, W. Va. in 1924.

C. J. Stulting and M. L. Beard became Elders here in 1912.

**CORNELIUS JOHN STULTING** — a native of Holland, and reared in the Reformed Faith of the Dutch Church, was a teacher in the County Schools of Pocahontas. He died in 1922. In a description of him by his pastor, he was a man of "Industry, frugality, and rigid honesty", and "had the stern virtues of the Puritan training received in his father's home."

**OF MR. BEARD** — son of William T. Beard, is the following memorial statement in the sessional records of this church: "Matthew Lee Beard, Sr., was born May 26, 1853, and fell asleep May 12, 1938, at the age of 84 years, 11 months, and 16 days. He lived a long useful life in this community. He united with the Oak Grove Church by Confession of Faith August 29, 1892. He was elected a Deacon on the second Sunday of September 1894. He was appointed superintendent of the Sunday School on April 28, 1900. He was elected and ordained an Elder of the Oak Grove Church May 19, 1912." Thus, he served faithfully for twenty-six years in this office.

In 1921 Summers McNeel and Colbert W. Kinnison were elected Elders.

**SUMMERS McNEEL** — Thomas Summers McNeel was elected an Elder on July 31, 1921. Before moving to Marlinton in the fall of 1923 he served as Clerk of Session from April 1, 1922 to the time of moving. A lawyer, he was Prosecuting Attorney of Pocahontas County from 1901 to 1905. Born in 1872 expiring in 1950, he served his church, country and county with dignity. Mr. McNeel was married to Mary Frances McNulty. One daughter, Nancy.

**COLBERT W. KINNISON** — a lineal descendant of the pioneer Charles Kinnison, was elected in 1921 and served until his death, September 28, 1959. He was Clerk of Session longer than anyone else in church history, serving from 1928 until 1950.

**W. M. IRVINE** — became an Elder in 1924, later moving to Huntington, West Virginia.

**JOHN GRAY HAMRICK** — was elected and ordained to the Eldership in 1924. He was one of the founders of the Beard Chapel work, and was active in its Sunday School.

Three men were added to the Eldership in 1930.

**HENRY W. BEARD** — was elected Elder January 5, 1930. He served his church faithfully for many years. Serving as Assistant Sunday School Superintendent for 6 years before his election as Sunday School Superintendent in 1926. He served until 1942 when he and his family moved to Lewisburg. His service as Elder spanned from 1930

to 1942, 1946 until his death November 9, 1951. He was elected Clerk of Session June 18, 1950, serving until his death.

**WM. H. CACKLEY** — elected January 5, 1930. He served until 1955 when his health became poor. He died August 16, 1967.

**HENRY HARPER BEARD** — a descendant of Josiah Beard, was born at Beard, West Virginia in 1905. He joined Oak Grove Church in 1917 and was elected an Elder in 1930, serving until 1974. He was a farmer, taught school and was an insurance agent with State Farm Insurance Company for over forty years. He passed away January 5, 1983.

Two men were elected in 1938. R. Duncan Moore and G. Cameron Beard.

**ROBERT DUNCAN MOORE** — moved to Stoney Bottom from Virginia in 1900. He married Eva S. McLaughlin in 1903. He moved to Beard in 1908 and to Hillsboro in 1918. He was a merchant from 1908 to 1951. Mr. Moore served Oak Grove Church as both Deacon and Elder.

**GEORGE CAMERON BEARD** — was elected an Elder January 30, 1938 when the rotary system for officers was first adopted by a vote of 18 to 17. He was faithful in his attendance and was Treasurer of the Sunday School for many years. At his death he left a legacy to the Church. He served as Deacon beginning in 1907. He died June 8, 1950.

In 1941 Virgil Beckett and John O. McNeel were chosen.

**VIRGIL BECKETT** — served as Elder from April 27, 1941, until the summer of 1945 when he moved to Pittsburgh, Pa. He was active in all church work serving as Sunday School Superintendent and young People's League adviser. While living here he was a grade school principal.

**JOHN OSBORNE McNEEL M.D.** — was ordained April 27, 1941. During WWII he served in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and Austria with the rank of Major. After the war he practiced in Marlinton, Lewisburg, Seattle, Wash., and St. Louis, Mo. He did much work on the McNeel Family Record. He died June 19, 1957 of accidental drowning.

**JACOB MOFFETT McNEEL SR.** — was elected an Elder April 23, 1944, having served as Deacon since 1938. He served Oak Grove Church as Sunday School Superintendent, Clerk of Session and Chairman of the Pulpit Nominating Committee. He served Presbytery on various committees and commissions. His faithful labors were honored in April 1956 by his election as moderator of Greenbrier Presbytery. Records don't show any other church member going as a commissioner to General Assembly until he was elected in 1945 and again in 1955. He died February 19, 1959.

April 28, 1946 John S. Kellison and Joel P. Beard were elected Elders.

**JOEL P. BEARD** — was an active church member most of his life. He was elected Trustee of Church Property in 1913 when he was 21 years old. He was elected and ordained a Deacon in 1927, elected



and ordained an Elder in 1946. He served as Trustee for 53 years, Deacon for 19 years and Elder for 20 years. A farmer by profession, he served as Sunday School Secretary. He died May 2, 1966.

**JOHN S. KELLISON** — served from 1946 to 1971. He served his church as Clerk of Session, Pulpit Nominating Committee and delegate to Presbytery and Synod meetings. He was a farmer and professional football coach and scout. In failing health he was elected Elder Emeritus October 19, 1969 until his death May 7, 1971.

**JOSEPH WILSON McNEEL** — was elected April 25, 1948, serving until December 31, 1970. He was a kind, sympathetic person, always willing to do his part. He served as Clerk of Session in 1960 and 1961. His service as a Deacon extended from June 6, 1935 until April 26, 1942. After suffering a broken hip he lived his later days in Denmar Hospital, being elected Elder Emeritus January 22, 1978. He died August 31, 1983.

**CARL G. BEARD** — was elected a Deacon in Oak Grove Church on April 25, 1946 and was elected an Elder in 1948. He passed away February 3, 1949.

**KYLE NICKELL BEARD** — was elected on July 17, 1954 as Elder having served as Deacon since 1924. He served faithfully in the Beard Chapel until its closing and since has attended Oak Grove Church.

**CLARENCE W. BEARD** — was elected July 17, 1954, having served as a Deacon since 1935, overseeing much of the church work as Chairman of The Board of Deacons. He served as Elder faithfully as his health permitted, leading to his election as Elder Emeritis in November 1987.

**JACOB MOFFETT McNEEL JR.** — was elected Elder November 29, 1959, after serving as Deacon since 1954. He has served as Sunday School Superintendent from 1951 to the present time. Other services rendered were Clerk of Session, Sunday School teacher, Bible School planner, member of The Pulpit Nominating Committee, Christian Education Committee and choir. He served on Greenbrier Presbytery Home Mission Committee, Congregational Care committee, and Commission on the Minister. In 1970 he was honored as commissioner to the General Assembly held in Memphis, Tennessee. On September 25, 1973, he moderated the last meeting of the old Greenbrier Presbytery. He serves as history chairman of Bi-centennial Celebration.

**LLOYD D. PAYNE** — was born at Seebert, West Virginia, July 27, 1902. He was a merchant for many years. He served Oak Grove Church as both Elder in 1959 and Deacon and was Sunday School Treasurer for many years. He was elected Elder on November 29, 1959 and served until December 31, 1979. He died May 28, 1986 at Glendale, W. Va.

**SAMUEL C. HILL** — served from 1968 to 1978. He was a retired engineer for C&P Telephone Company from Charleston, W. Va. He and his wife built a home here and were active in the church. He was involved in State Boy Scout work and was instrumental in locating

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Buckskin Council Scout Reservation in Pocahontas County. His death was June 20, 1978.

**W. SHERMAN BEARD** — was elected an Elder October 19, 1969, having served as Deacon beginning in 1954. He served ably as Church Treasurer from January 1955 until the end of 1987. During WWII he served his country as a bomber pilot, flying many missions over Europe. He also has served on the Pulpit Nominating Committee and as Assistant Sunday School Superintendent.

**HUBERT A. LEWIS** — was born at Hillsboro, West Virginia, April 13, 1904. He was a farmer and postal clerk. He joined Oak Grove Church at an early age. He served as both Elder and Deacon as well as Sunday School Secretary. He was elected Elder October 19, 1969. He was made Elder Emeritus in November 1981.

**DHARL DEVER** — was elected Elder November 1, 1971. He represented the church by working as scoutmaster, moving his membership in 1987 to South Carolina.

**WILLIAM D. MOORE** — was born at Beard, West Virginia. He attended public schools and graduated from Hillsboro High School. Since his father's death in 1951 he has operated a general merchandise store in Hillsboro. He served as a Deacon prior to his being elected an Elder in 1972.

**HUBERT SAMUEL CALLISON** — He married Virginia Lee Beard on August 1, 1944 at Oak Grove Presbyterian Church. Hubert transferred his membership to Oak Grove from Sharon Methodist Church in 1945. He was elected to the Board of Deacons in 1955, serving until elected an Elder on December 29, 1974 under present plan of rotation of elders and deacons. Hubert serves faithfully in any undertaking for the church and in the service of Jesus Christ.

**JAMES K. ROCK** — was born at Beard West Virginia, November 15, 1906. He moved to Renick in 1924 and to Hillsboro in 1929. He transferred his membership from Laurel Hill Presbyterian Church to Oak Grove in 1932. He worked as a self employed carpenter and for the Pocahontas Board of Education from which he retired in 1972. He was elected Elder on December 29, 1974. He served as both Elder and Deacon, attended General Assembly in Kansas City, Mo., in 1979 and was elected Elder Emeritus in September 1987. He has been active in all areas of church work, serving as Clerk of Session, Sunday School Teacher, Choir Member and Church Sexton.

**ALFRED E. McNEEL** — served from 1976 to 1979 after serving terms as a Deacon for 22 years. He was a farmer and Clerk of the County Court. He died February 7, 1984.

**SAMUEL E. McNEEL Sr.** — was elected November 6, 1977 and served as Elder only two years in Oak Grove after having been ordained in Hialeah, Fla. He also served this church as a Deacon, first elected in 1955. He died April 8, 1980.

**VIRGINIA CALLISON** — served a one-year term as Elder being the first woman to be elected to the office on November 6, 1977. The daughter of Former Elder Joel P. Beard, she has been active in many church areas: Historian, Sunday School Teacher, Circle Chairman,

Church Nominating Committee member and Women of the Church President.

**THOMAS W. VANREENEN** — previously served as Deacon prior to his election as an Elder November 11, 1979. He served as Clerk of Session and Sunday School Treasurer.

**LAWRENCE WORKMAN** also has served as a Deacon. Elected an Elder November 11, 1979.

**WILDA Y. CHAPPELL** — has been working hard taking pleasure in a job well done. She was the first woman Deacon in 1970, first woman Clerk of Session, a choir member, and president of Women of the Church. She was elected an Elder November 9, 1980.

**DAVID HYER** — lived in the area while Executive Director at The Pearl S. Buck Birthplace. Early in 1988 he moved his church membership back to Elkins. He was elected an Elder November 8, 1981.

**JAMES FLEMING** — a school teacher, presented to the church a great gift, making and installing communion cup holders. He is also a choir member. He was elected an Elder November 7, 1982, after having served as a Deacon.

**LOUISE McNEEL** — active in the church many years as Sunday School teacher, Women of the Church President and Deacon. Elected an Elder November 25, 1984.

**EUGENE M. SIMMONS** — serves as county Prosecuting Attorney, is active in helping with work projects. Elected Elder on November 25, 1984.

**JOEL CALLISON** — previously a Deacon has spearheaded details of work camps which are sponsored by Oak Grove Church. Elected Elder November 1986.

**LANTY F. McNEEL** — owns and operates the farm where pioneer John McNeel, his ancestor, first settled in Little Levels and built the White Pole Church (Methodist). He was elected an Elder November 1986.

**LINDA HILL VANREENEN** — a school teacher, church organist, Sunday School teacher, is active in all church functions. Elected an Elder November 1987.

Presently the active Elders serving are Wilda Y. Chappell, Eugene M. Simmons, Lawrence Workman, Joel Callison, Lanty F. McNeel, Louise McNeel, James Fleming, J. Moffett McNeel Jr. and Linda VanReenen.



## DEACONS

Seventy-one years after the first appearance of The Little Levels Church in the Minutes of Presbytery, we have the first record of the service of Deacons. This was in 1859. Whether Oak Grove Church had elected and ordained any Deacons before that time, or whether the responsibilities of the diaconate in those years fell wholly upon the Elders, we do not know. But beginning near the Civil War, and continuing until the present, is a fair record of the election and ordination of Deacons. Given as follows, are their names, and the respective years of their installation:

1859 .....	Moffett Beard Alvin Clark Harmanus Stulting
1869 .....	Samuel T. Clark Robert H. Moffett
1881 .....	C. W. Beard
1894 .....	Matthew Lee Beard Thomas A. Sydenstricker
1907 .....	Cameron Clark Plummer Beard George Cameron Beard W. M. Irvine
1912 .....	S. E. McNeel L. P. McLaughlin C. F. Stulting
1924 .....	Kyle Beard Andrew McLaughlin
1927 .....	G. B. Bartholomew Joel P. Beard
1929 .....	R. D. Moore John May W. D. Clark
1935 .....	Clarence Beard Joseph W. McNeel Clarence Dorman
1938 .....	Eric S. Clutter J. Moffett McNeel, Sr. Preston McLaughlin
1944 .....	Richard H. Balzer
1946 .....	William Moore Wilmer Ruckman Carl G. Beard
1948 .....	James K. Rock John S. Chappell Houston Simmons Marvin Doss

The latest change in the term of the Board of Deacons was made in 1984 to conform with the Book of Order. At the present time there

are nine deacons on the Board. Elections are held annually for a term of three years and a person can serve for two consecutive terms (aggregate of six years) then must be off the Board for at least one year before being eligible to be re-elected.

In 1970 Wilda Y. Chappell was the first woman to be elected to the diaconate. Sue Hollandsworth became the first woman to be Moderator of the Board in this, our Bicentennial year.

Since 1948 an additional 47 persons have faithfully served the church as deacons. Listed below are their names with the year of their first installation as deacons.

1952	W. H. Doss
1954	Lloyd D. Payne
	Alfred E. McNeel
	Hubert Lewis
1955	J. Moffett McNeel Jr.
	W. Sherman Beard
	Hubert Callison
1956	Samuel E. McNeel Sr.
	Richard I. McNeel
1958	Jesse Ray
1959	J. C. Spivey
	Robert L. Beard
1960	Forrest L. Beard
1961	Gilmer Callison
1962	Daniel D. Skaggs
1963	William Patton
1964	George Spencer
	Preston G. White
1966	Glenn Cook
1967	Ray McKeeever
1968	Joel Callison
	Glen R. Gilkerson
1970	Randall H. Price
1971	Wilda Y. Chappell
	Cleatrice S. McLaughlin
1972	John L. Hilleary
	Lawrence Workman
1973	Paul E. Hilleary
1974	Donald E. McNeel
1975	Hubert VanReenan
	Mary Jane Gilkerson
1976	Thomas W. VanReenen
1978	Louise B. McNeel
	Nora Lou Workman
1981	John R. LaRue
	William S. Beard Jr.
	James Fleming
	Donald K. Sharp

1983 .....	Larry Simmons Virginia M. Kinnison Mary Dever
1985 .....	Charles VanReenan Samuel E. McNeel Jr. Janet McNeel
1986 .....	R. Lynn Randolph
1987 .....	Sue Hollandsworth
1988 .....	Sally Nottingham

Members of the Board of Deacons in 1988 are: Sue Hollandsworth, Moderator; Donald K. Sharp, Donald E. McNeel, Larry Simmons, Virginia Kinnison, Charles VanReenan, Samuel E. McNeel Jr., R. Lynn Randolph and Sally Nottingham.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK

The heart of the church's program of religious education is in its Sunday School work, and that feature has been one of the chief sources of the church's life here. The first Sunday School within the bounds of the Oak Grove congregation seems to have been conducted by Sampson L. Matthews who studied under Dr. John McElhenney of Lewisburg. He married Nancy Edgar, daughter of Thomas Edgar of Greenbrier County. They settled on the Swago Farm in Pocahontas County, and there, according to Dr. Wm. T. Price, in the summers of 1826 and 1827, conducted a Sabbath School in their home for the children in their community and of adjacent communities. Mr. Matthews opened the school at 10:00 A.M., reading a chapter in the Bible and offering prayer. Then followed morning classes with recess at noon, and two or three hours of class work in the afternoon, Mrs. Matthews doing most of the teaching. Evidently this Sabbath School was much like that of Robert Raikes, founder of the modern Sunday School. In Raikes' Sabbath School in England in 1783, both the Bible and secular texts were studied.

It was written that those worshipping in the old "Brick Church" at the Cemetery, spoke of the flourishing Sunday School conducted there. When the church was moved into the village of Hilsboro, the Sunday School continued to be a source of strength to the church's life and work in the frame building and in the present building. Unfortunately, the church records do not carry the names of the Sunday School Officers until about 1880. Since then the following have served as Superintendent: Matthew L. Beard, Sherman H. Clark, Edwin L. Beard, E. I. Holt, T. A. Sydenstricker, Henry W. Beard, Virgil Beckett, J. Moffett McNeel Sr., and J. Moffett McNeel Jr. The following have served as Assistant Superintendent: M. J. McNeel, D. S. Sydenstricker, D.D., George B. Bartholomew, Henry W. Beard, Joseph W. McNeel, Harold Hulbert, Richard Balzar, James K. Rock and W. Sherman Beard. Secretaries have been: C. J. Stulting, J. A. Sydenstricker, J. Moffett McNeel Sr., Richard McNeel, Preston



McLaughlin, Lloyd Payne, and Hubert Lewis. Treasurers: M. L. Beard, C. E. Beard, G. C. Beard, J. Moffett McNeel Jr., Samuel McNeel Sr., Lloyd Payne and Thomas VanReenan.

Some pastors have placed more emphasis than others on Sunday School work. But the School continues and strengthens under the leadership of Clay Macaulay and a Christian Education Committee.

Present officers and teachers of Oak Grove Sunday School are: Superintendent, J. Moffett McNeel Jr.; Assistant Superintendents, W. Sherman Beard and James K. Rock; Secretary, Hubert Lewis; Treasurer, Thomas VanReenen; Teachers, Adult Class, Virginia Kinnison, James K. Rock, Mabel McNeel, Virginia Callison and J. Moffett McNeel, Jr.; Young Adult Class, Clay and Pam Macaulay, Linda VanReenen, and Donald and Sharon Sharp; Senior Class, Donald McNeel and Janet McNeel; Junior Class, Jenny Rose and Karen McNeel; Primary Class, Sue Hollandsworth and Sandra Simmons; Beginners Class, Linda Simmons and Karen McNeel.

### VACATION BIBLE SCHOOLS

Bible School has been a hand in hand endeavor of the Sunday School for many years. Attendance in July 1936 was listed as 65. In the 1940's and '50's Bible schools were held at Beard Chapel and Caesar Mt. as well as Oak Grove. About 1965 Bible School was changed from daytime to evenings so more adults could give of their time, thus we started having an adult class usually taught by the pastor. These Bible Schools are conducted for the children, young people and adults and provide an intensive study of the Bible, hymns, Catechisms and Beliefs.

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK

Some form of young people's work has been conducted since about 1915 by volunteer leaders and pastors. For a while Christian Endeavor type of work was done. Later the Kingdom Highways plan was followed. It has been known as The Young People's League. Now for many years it has been known by Presbyterian Youth Fellowship. Many outstanding and worthwhile projects have been undertaken, such as, leading morning worship, baskets for shut-ins, cleaning church property, collecting for UNICEF, community Easter egg hunt and Christmas caroling.

In addition to being active locally, some have attended other functions as Presbytery Youth Advisor Delegates, Youth camps, retreats, and conferences. One hundred twenty-five young people attended Presbytery's Pioneer Conclave at Oak Grove in May 1954, a day of interaction and inspiration for the youth. Rev. J. K. Fleming was one of the instructors. He was minister at Greenville, W. Va. at the time.

In 1961 Sharon White (Byrd) and (Dr.) Irvine Prather were members of Senior Hi Council of Presbytery.

In 1962 (Dr.) Irvine Prather served as Moderator of Presbytery Youth Council.

In 1966 Kathy Beard (Blough) served as editor-historian of Presbytery Youth Council and in 1968 she served as Moderator of the Youth Council. She also was re-elected that year, because of her leadership, to represent the Presbyterian Youth Council at High School Week at The Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Va.

In 1972 Susan Chappell (Flaim) attended the Youth Christian Movement, Expo 72 in Dallas, Texas. This movement was a forerunner of Key 73, a continental wide evangelistic movement to bring Christ to everyone.

In June 1987 Oak Grove was honored to have Charles Andrew McNeel selected Presbytery's Youth Advisory Delegate to the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church USA held in Biloxi, Miss. He served on the Budget and Finance committees, an important committee requiring many long hours of work.

In 1988 Mattie Scott and Dennis VanReenan attended a "Faith and Arts Media Expression" conference held in Philadelphia, Pa. It was sponsored by the Presbyteries in the Synod of the Trinity.

In the program and activities of young people's work are good opportunities for training in the devotional life and personal initiative and responsibility.

## **WOMEN'S WORK**

The Women's Work constitutes a great spiritual arm in the work of Oak Grove Church. This department has developed through several types of organization. So far as we know, the first organized women's work in this Church was in 1902.

### **LADIES' MISSIONARY SOCIETY**

This was "The Ladies' Missionary Society." The first President was Miss Elizabeth Edgar (Mrs. H. W. McNeel). First Secretary, Miss Anna Wallace. First Treasurer, Nora Herold. The society had as its goal each year the contribution of \$24.00 to Mrs. Carrie Stulting Sydenstricker to be used for Mission work in China.

**LADIES' AID SOCIETY** — In 1905 the Ladies' Aid Society was formed. Data seems to be lacking as to names of the first officers and charter members. But it is known that this society was an active agency in promoting and supporting the church building project of 1910 and 1911. Serving at one time or another as president were, Mrs. Mollie Beard, and Mrs. Preston Clark.

**THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY** — These two, The Ladies' Missionary Society, and The Ladies' Aid Society continued to function separately through the years until the final merger into the Assembly's Plan of Women's Work. This came about in July 1921, the pastor, Rev. J. C. Johnson, presiding over a meeting of the Oak Grove women. The Auxiliary Plan was adopted and put into effect. The

women of Oak Grove Church were divided into circles, and secretaries were appointed to promote among the women the various church causes. The following women were present: Mrs. L. P. McLaughlin, Mrs. T. S. McNeel, Miss Anna Wallace, Mrs. C. W. Kinnison, Mrs. Verdie B. Mann, Miss Minnie Beard, Miss Eva Beard (Mrs. E. S. Clutter), Mrs. Henry W. Beard, Mrs. Preston Clark, and Mrs. H. W. McNeel. The first president was Mrs. L. P. McLaughlin. Circles were formed as follows: two circles at Hillsboro, and one each at Mill Point and Beard Chapel. Later a circle was maintained for a while on Caesar Mountain. The first circle chairmen were: Mrs. T. S. McNeel, Mrs. C. W. Kinnison, Mrs. Lanty McNeel, and Mrs. Bessie Beard. In 1932 The Women's Auxiliary of Greenbrier Presbytery held its annual session in this church.

In addition to the regular routine matters, good progress was made in several other features to which the women gave special emphasis. One was a School of Missions conducted for several years during the Foreign Mission season. Another was the "Lord's Acre Plan" in behalf of building repairs and improvements. Twice during the years 1946 and 1947 the women under the session's approval, sponsored a Visitation Evangelism Program. The results were approximately 30 additions to the church, 42 being received during that entire year. A splendid feature of the Women's work has been their promotion of benevolent contributions. Through their good observance of the special seasons for the causes, their devotion to the wider work of the Kingdom of our Lord, and their spirit of sacrificial giving, most of the credit in this church should go to its women for the several hundred dollars given annually for benevolent work. The following have served as president of the Auxiliary: Mrs. L. P. McLaughlin, Mrs. H. W. McNeel, Mrs. T. S. McNeel, Miss Anna Wallace, Mrs. E. S. Clutter, Mrs. Frank K. Johnston, Mrs. John K. Fleming, Mrs. George B. Bartholomew, Mrs. J. Moffett McNeel, Sr., and Mrs. H. Harper Beard.



## WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

About 1951 the name of the organization was changed to "The Women of the Church" or "W.O.C."

Service projects have been: World Mission's, Least Coin Offering, Davis Stuart School, Joy Gift, Mission Court, International Student Fund, Birthday Offering, Overseas Clothing and Relief Services, White Cross, Shut-ins (both community and in nursing homes) and college students from our church.

For several years in the 1950's the Sunday School rooms were used for a well-baby clinic served by a pediatrician and county health nurse. The women of the church, along with the Methodist women served as volunteers.

In 1962 three of our ladies completed terms of office on the Presbyterian level: Mrs. Elizabeth Beard, as president, Mrs. Mary Alice Beard, as corresponding secretary, and Mrs. Elma McNeel, as chairman of finance committee. 1963 saw Mrs. Elizabeth Beard as parliamentarian and Mrs. Mabel McNeel recording secretary of Presbyterian. Mrs. Elizabeth Beard served a term as Synodical Vice-President. Mrs. Mary Hilleary, Mrs. Cleatrice McLaughlin, Mrs. Elizabeth Beard and Mrs. Helen Painter have served as W.O.C. Chairman of District 3 of Greenbrier Presbytery. Oak Grove ladies have entertained Presbyterian in 1920, 1932, 1946, 1960, 1966 and 1984.

The following have been president of W.O.C.: Mrs. Mary K. Beard, Mrs. Mary M. Hilleary, Mrs. Annie Frances Rock, Mrs. Virginia Callison, Mrs. Elma McNeel, Mrs. Nelle Lewis, Mrs. Wilda Chappell, Mrs. Mary Alice Beard, Mrs. Louise McNeel, Mrs. Linda VanReenen, Mrs. Karen McNeel, and Mrs. Sandra Simmons.

And in this year of 1988 there is yet another name change, to Presbyterian Women. The president is Mrs. Helen Fleming.

An important activity, keeping records, has been done by the Historians. The first we have any record of is Miss Minnie Wallace. The historians following her were: Mrs. Agnes Cackley, Mrs. Eva Clutter, Mrs. Elizabeth Beard, Mrs. Carolyn Feagans Patton, Mrs. Helen Painter, Miss Arberta Shields, Mrs. Mary Hilleary, Mrs. Virginia Callison, Mrs. Katherine Beard and Mrs. Carolyn Randolph.

Over the years some money making projects have been undertaken with the money realized being used for church or manse repairs and/or needed fixtures.

God is at the center of what we as Presbyterian Women attempt to do, working at our local level to spread the Gospel near and far. Our Circle Bible lessons are a learning experience in God's truth and grace, as we meet each month for prayer, study and fellowship.

## **HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIPS WOMEN OF THE CHURCH**

An Honorary Life Membership in the Women of the Church, Presbyterian Church, (USA) is conferred upon an individual in recognition of faithful service in some area of the Church's work. It was begun in 1925 or 1926. Past W.O.C. presidents, leaders, teachers, officers, pastors, and missionaries have been among recipients. The church group desiring to confer this honor is asked to send a fee to the Office of Women, General Assembly Mission Board. The honoree is then eligible to receive a pin and a certificate. Funds derived from Honorary Life and Memorial Memberships are used in special projects of leader development of women. These funds which come from honoring the Christian service of women in a very real sense extend their life of service by helping other women grow in Christian faith and commitment as they learn to use the skills God has given them.

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church has bestowed this honor upon several members. The presentation was usually made in an appropriate ceremony, listing a brief sketch of the life of the honoree. The recipients are:

Rachel Ann Edgar McNeel, Dec. 1960.

Phamie Brown Gardien, Jan. 1969.

Lida McNeel Bartholomew, Nov. 1970.

Mamie Cackley Beard, Nov. 1974.

Lucy Price McLaughlin Beard, May 1976.

Mattie Winlock Arbuckle, Nov. 1976.

Louise Barlow McNeel, Oct. 1979.

Wilda Young Chappell, May 1980.

Annie Frances Harper Rock, Sept. 1981.

Elizabeth Clark Beard was presented a life membership by Greenbrier Presbytrial in September 1962, upon completion of her term as president of Greenbrier Presbyterial.

**GROUNDS AND BUILDINGS** — The fact is pretty well established that during its first forty years, this Church owned neither a lot nor a building. Both Mrs. Yeager and Dr. Price in their accounts of the early life of Oak Grove Church, state that during those years preaching services were held in the homes of its members — especially of the Poages, Beards, McNeels, and others. Since the Methodist congregation had a house of worship some years earlier than did the Presbyterians, it is possible that the Oak Grove congregation held some of its early services in the Methodist Church.

Our Church grounds have been kept over the years but the aging process has taken its toll on the maple trees. Oak trees are being set out in the hope, that in a few years, the name "Oak Grove Church" will again be correct. New shrubbery was planted in 1986. Gutters and downspouts were also put on the building that year. Railings have been placed on the steps and in 1987 a long awaited wheel chair ramp was constructed. Also, in 1987 the porte-cochere (carriage porch) which had been torn down a number of years ago was rebuilt at the north entrance to the church to restore the original look.

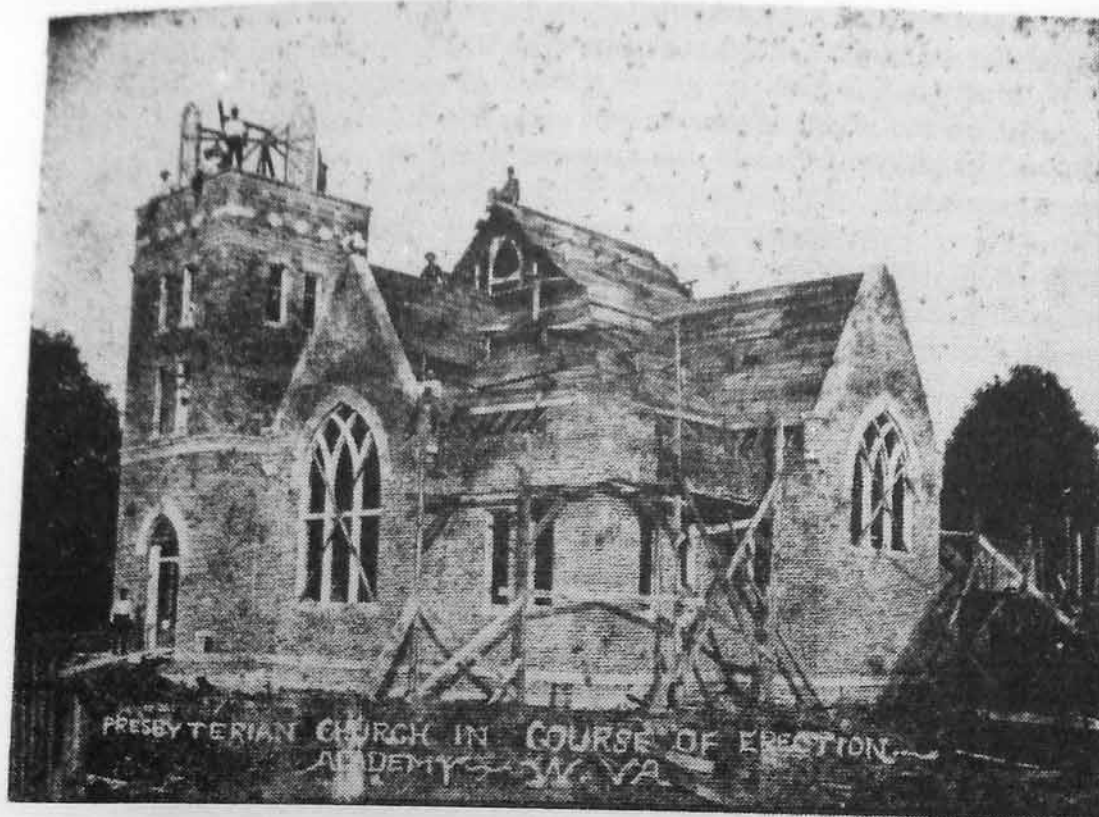


**THE "BRICK CHURCH"** — In 1828 a lot was obtained in a large oak grove where the Oak Grove Cemetery now is, and there the "Brick Church" as it was called, was erected. In Deed Book 1 in Pocahontas County Court House is a record of this gift of Jan. 8, 1828: "William Poage, Grantor to John Jordan, William T. Callison, John Baxter, Josiah Beard, Moses H. Poage, and Samuel D. Poage . . . Trustees to the Brick Church about to be built and occupied as a Presbyterian Meeting House . . . doth grant and convey unto the Trustees aforesaid one acre and one fourth part of an acre." At the time of this construction the name of the church was changed from "The Little Levels Church" to "The Oak Grove Church."





**THE WOODEN BUILDING** — Some time after the Civil War, probably in the 1870's use of the old "Brick Church" was discontinued because of a crack in the wall which made it unsafe. The Methodists kindly offered the use of their church basement, and there the Presbyterians worshipped until the new building could be erected. In 1880 Sherman H. Clark gave one acre in a beautiful maple grove in the heart of Hillsboro, and on that lot a frame structure was erected. Having torn down the "Brick Church," bricks from the old building were used in constructing the basement and flues of the new house of worship.



**THE PRESENT BUILDING** — On August 8, 1909, in a Congregational Meeting moderated by Rev. D. S. Sydenstricker, D.D., "It was decided without a dissenting vote to build a church costing not less than five thousand dollars. The pastor, Rev. J. C. Johnson was directed to begin a canvass for funds at once." In a congregational meeting March 6, 1910, it was "decided to adopt plans for a brick building as designed by Mr. D. Wiley Anderson, of Richmond, Virginia. The following Building Committee was appointed with the understanding that all funds be raised before the contract for building is let: M. J. McNeel, M. L. Beard, E. H. Moore, M. Wallace, S. E. McNeel, T. A. Sydenstricker, and J. C. Johnson." During the period of construction the Presbyterian congregation conducted its worship services and other meetings in the Methodist Church. By 1911 the Church had been completed at a cost of \$13,000.00 and was dedicated. In 1940 the old slate roof was torn off, and a new metal roof put on at a cost of approximately \$850.00. In 1942 the auditorium was replastered and wood work revarnished at a cost of \$429.00.

Over the years the church building has been maintained and improved to make it a more usable and comfortable place in which to worship. Many hours of loving work have been provided by members and friends to keep the building upgraded.

In 1952 a 73 foot well was drilled and by 1956 the water system was completed, and the kitchen moved to the main floor. Cabinets were installed in the kitchen in 1965 and a new refrigerator purchased in 1987. Carpet was placed in the sanctuary in 1961 and the heating system upgraded. However, the two oil furnaces were not bought until

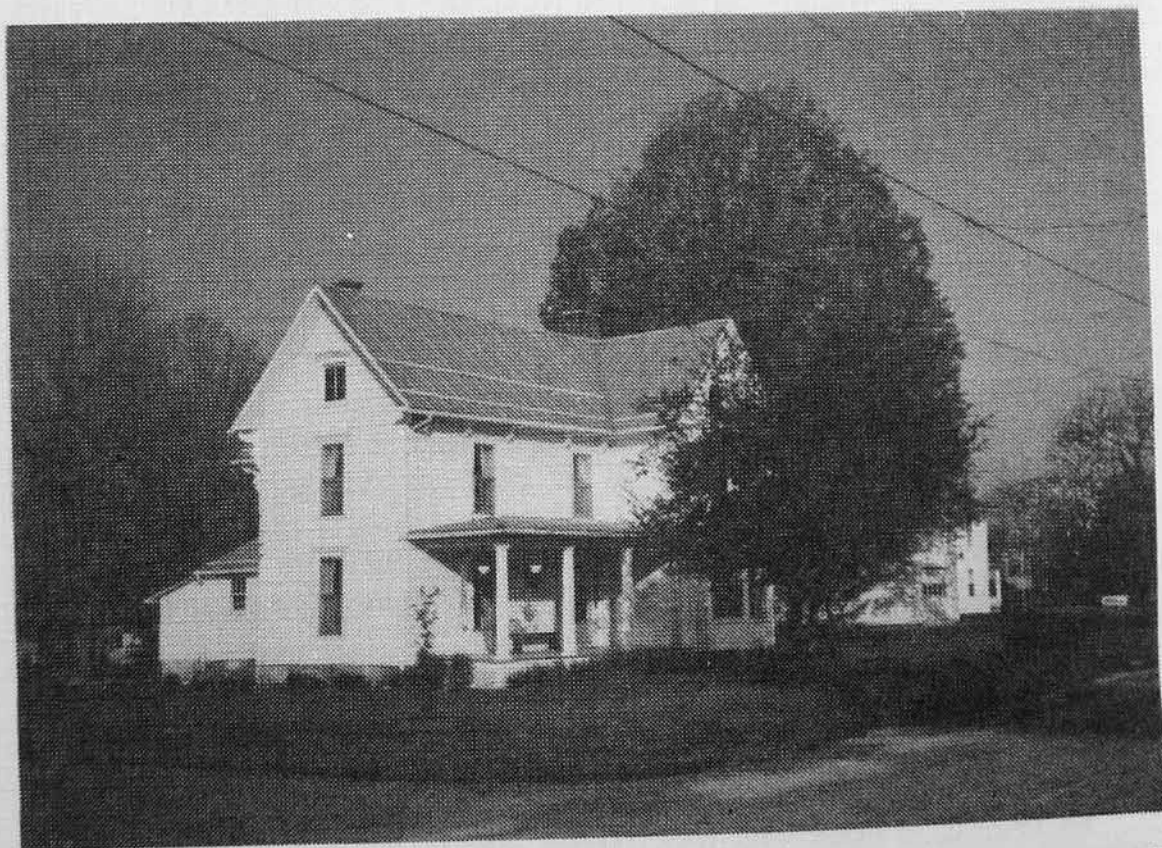


1969. Storm windows and insulation have made the building warmer and easier to heat. Lexan was put over the stained glass windows in 1980 as protection for the glass as well as insulation.

Within the walls of these three structures — the "Brick Church," the wooden building, and the present building, a goodly number of stated meetings of Greenbrier Presbytery have been held. Fall Meetings of Presbytery were held here in 1838, 1843, 1854, 1866, 1877, 1888, 1904, 1911, 1918, and 1926. A two day meeting was held in the Spring of 1942 and again in the Spring of 1950. A called meeting was held in February of 1953, the Winter meeting in 1957, the Spring meeting in 1960 and the Winter meeting of 1966.

The last Presbytery meeting held in Oak Grove Church was the final meeting of the original Greenbrier Presbytery, held September 25, 1973. This meeting was moderated by J. Moffett McNeel, Jr. The Synod of West Virginia held its stated meeting here in the Fall of 1933.

**OAK GROVE CEMETERY** — Since discontinuance of the "Brick Church," the original Poage Grant of 1828 is now used entirely for burial purposes, and is known as "The Oak Grove Cemetery." It is used by people of all denominations throughout the community, and of some adjacent communities. In 1948 an Oak Grove Cemetery Association was set up by The Session for the Cemetery's maintenance and improvement, this to be under the direction and control of the Trustees of Oak Grove Church.



**THE OAK GROVE MANSE** — For a hundred years or more arrangements have been such that the Minister serving Oak Grove Church could live here in Hillsboro. It seems doubtful however, that the church owned a house for the Minister prior to the Civil War. Part

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of the property, where the manse now is, was acquired by the church as a gift from Samuel D. Poage. This consisted of one acre and buildings for the Presbyterian Parsonage in Hillsboro, date of the donation being Dec. 16, 1869. In 1881 several more acres were added to the manse property through donation by Charles W. Beard and his wife. About 1890, or near that date, the old manse, a log structure, was torn down, and the present building was erected.

Over the years the manse has been improved through the combined efforts of the Women of the Church, the Circles and the Board of Deacons. Also, gifts have been received from various individuals. In 1953 a new roof was put on and spouting added along the new windows and cabinets in the kitchen. The next year a downstairs bathroom was added. In 1955 an oil furnace was installed. Storm windows were purchased in 1957 and 1965. In 1959 a new garage was built for a cost of \$1,125.21 with the driveway paved in 1968. Also, that year carpet was installed in the living room and downstairs hallway. Aluminum siding was put on the manse in 1978 at a cost of \$6,500. While the pulpit was vacant in 1984 and 1985 the W.O.C. and Deacons spent many hours working at the manse to get it refurbished for a new minister. In 1986 the manse was connected to the new town sewerage system and some new shrubbery was planted by Clay and Pam Macaulay. A chain link fence was put around the back yard in 1987 and some additional shrubbery planted.

## TRUSTEES OF OAK GROVE CHURCH PROPERTY

Year Of Apppointment	Name
1828 .....	John Jordan William T. Callison John Baxter Josiah Beard Moses H. Poage Samuel D. Poage W. D. Johnson Henry M. Moffett James Miller William F. Shanklin Col. Paul McNeel William T. Beard R. G. Miller
1848 .....	
1858 .....	

1902 .....	T. A. Sydenstricker C. L. Clark Ellis McCarty Allen Kinnison J. W. Beard E. L. Beard
1906 .....	M. J. McNeel (For Seebert) C. J. Stutling
1910 .....	T. A. Sydenstricker Claude Stutling Sherman Beard E. H. McLaughlin Carl G. Beard
1913 .....	T. A. Sydenstricker C. F. Stutling Joel P. Beard Carl G. Beard E. H. McLaughlin
1923 .....	(For Beard Chapel) R. M. Beard (For Beard Chapel) John Gray Hamrick (For Beard Chapel) John V. May
1948 .....	Joel P. Beard Carl G. Beard G. C. Beard W. S. Beard
1950 .....	Clarence W. Beard Kyle N. Beard Alfred E. McNeel Joel P. Beard W. Sherman Beard
1967 .....	Clarence W. Beard Kyle N. Beard Alfred E. McNeel John S. Chappell W. Sherman Beard
1984 .....	Clarence W. Beard Kyle N. Beard Joel S. Callison John S. Chappell W. Sherman Beard

When Northern and Southern Presbyterians reunited, the Book of Order maintains that the active elders would also serve as trustees, so to comply, this was done in a congregational meeting November 4, 1984.



### OAK GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHOIR

In research prior to the 1988 Bicentennial, music was found to be an important part of Oak Grove Presbyterian Church Services from the beginning, but we can find no written records before 1929. However, in talking with some of the members, we have determined that Eva Moore, Emma C. Beard, Mary Beard Johnson, and Elizabeth Edgar McNeel had been Church Organists at various times.

In 1929, Dorothy McNeel was made Chairman of Music. "The Choir continues to meet for its regular work each Wednesday night throughout the year, and substantial progress was made in its work of Hymns and Anthems." (Quote)

About 1930, Miss McNeel moved to Charleston where she taught music in the Public School System.

In 1947 a Hammond Electric Organ was purchased, "under the able leadership of R. H. Blazer and his committee," and the generous contributions of the Church. The Service of Dedication took place early in November, with Mr. Northrup Brown of Charleston as Organist. It was said to have been "one of the largest crowds ever to assemble in our church."

That year the following were elected to places in leadership in music in Oak Grove Church: Eva Beard Clutter, Organist, and Martha Ann Edgar and "Peggy" McNeel, Assistant.

In 1948 Ethel Jefferys often played the Organ, and Mary Alice Beard organized Junior and Intermediate Choirs. In 1949 Dorothy McNeel, then Supervisor of Public School Music in Pocahontas County, again directed the Choir. At Christmas a Musical Program was presented by the combined Presbyterian and Methodist Choirs. The Easter Service in 1950 was directed by Dorothy McNeel, and



the Christmas Musical Program presented by the Junior and Senior Choirs was under her direction and that of Mary Alice Beard. Dorothy McNeel moved to Cincinnati, Ohio to teach Public School Music and Eva Beard Clutter and Ethel Jeffreys played the organ. That year the choir also presented a Program of Christmas Music at the Federal Prison Camp at Mill Point.

In 1954 Mary Alice Beard became Choir Director and Organist. In 1956, in her absence, Lois Beard became Organist and Choir Director with assistant organists Martha McNeel and Ann Hilleary. Mary Alice Beard came back in 1959 and she and Lois Beard again organized a Junior Choir. Lois Beard moved to St. Mary's in 1960 and in appreciation for all her assistance, she was presented with an antique organ from the Church.

The Junior and Senior Choirs, under Mary Alice Beard's direction, presented the Joy Gift Program in 1963. In 1966 Peggy McNeel became Pianist. The Choir was commended for its faithful service to our Church, and the young people for their many talents, both vocal and as pianists and organists. Karen Chappell was Organist in this period.

Dorothy McNeel Backs of Cincinnati, Ohio came back to Hillsboro in 1968 on her vacation, and to arrange for the sale of her house, and the Choir was again under her direction during that time. Later that year a Junior Choir was again started by Mary Alice Beard, assisted by Peggy McNeel. From 1969 through 1974, because of the large number of young people, we had two groups.

Peggy McNeel was on a People to People Goodwill Tour in Europe in July 1972 and Wilmer Ruckman, Pianist, accompanied Mary Alice Beard with the Church music.

In 1977 we had Mary Alice Beard as Choir Director, Peggy McNeel as Pianist, and Linda VanReenen joined us as Organist.

In 1978, Samuel C. Hill, as a Memorial to his wife Elinor, requested that a fund be started to secure new Choir robes. The Committee composed of Lloyd Payne, Wilda Chappell, and Virginia Lee Callison presented the cause to the congregation and through their generous giving, new green choir robes arrived in time for the Christmas Program, and were dedicated on December 31st.

In January 1980, Richard I. McNeel died and through the generous gifts given in his memory, his family started a Fund to buy a new Piano. In April, Samuel E. McNeel, Sr. died and his family added their many Memorial Gifts to the Piano Fund. A generous gift was given by the Women of the Church, and the remainder of the money needed was taken from the General Fund. This enabled us to buy a new Baldwin Piano and have it installed and dedicated in October.

In 1985, the Evening Circle furnished material and Sue Hollandsworth and Sandra Simmons made robes for the Junior Choir. They sang at a worship service, Fellowship Night, and on May 12th in honor of Mother's Day. At this time they presented red carnations to their Mothers and others who helped them. On Father's Day the Junior Choir was in charge of the music and also made a large Banner

which they placed in the Fellowship Hall for the Father's Day Brunch.

The Adult Choir was invited to the Marlinton Presbyterian Church Centennial Celebration in April 1981. On Sunday afternoon, April 26th the Choir, joined by Rev. J. D. Arbuckle, Mary Alice Beard, Director, Linda VanReenen, Organist, and Peggy McNeel, Pianist, led the worship through music — singing "Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Bless This House" and "How Wonderful."

That year the Women of the Church purchased a filing cabinet for the storing of Church music, which was greatly appreciated by the Choir.

A program was held at McNeel Gymnasium on June 25, 1983 to commemorate the birthday of renowned author, Pearl S. Buck, and the first day of issue of United States Postage Stamps in her honor. Our Choir was asked to sing, and under the direction of Mary Alice Beard, with the accompaniment of Lindan VanReenen and Peggy McNeel, presented three Anthems — "Battle Hymn of the Republic," "My Home Among the Hills," and "For This Is God."

On November 13th, 1983 the Choir took part in the Celebration for a Ministry for Christ and His Church honoring the Rev. and Mrs. J. D. Arbuckle for 47 years of ministry in the service of Jesus Christ, and his retirement from the ministry.

The choir remained active during the interim from 1983 to 1985 while we were searching for a new pastor.

On February 5, 1983, junior choir practice was resumed and the junior and senior choirs presented an Easter Cantata, and sang Christmas Carols for the patients at Denmar State Hospital. In 1986-87 the Junior Choir was directed by Barbara Lewis with Janet McNeel as Pianist.

The Adult Choir has sung several times at Marlinton during Pioneer Days, dressed appropriately as pioneers.

We presented a Special Anthem — "Psalm 121" for the Service of Ordination and Installation for the Rev. W. Clay Macaulay, which was held September 8, 1985.

The Cantatas presented, particularly at Christmas, "are accepted as a Gift from the Choir, and the Congregation looks forward to these presentations." (Quote)

"The Oak Grove Choir is to be commended for its faithful service to our Church, and we are most grateful for its many talented members. It is not too much to say the Choir has made a valuable and uplifting contribution to the spirit of praise and worship of the Church." (Quote)

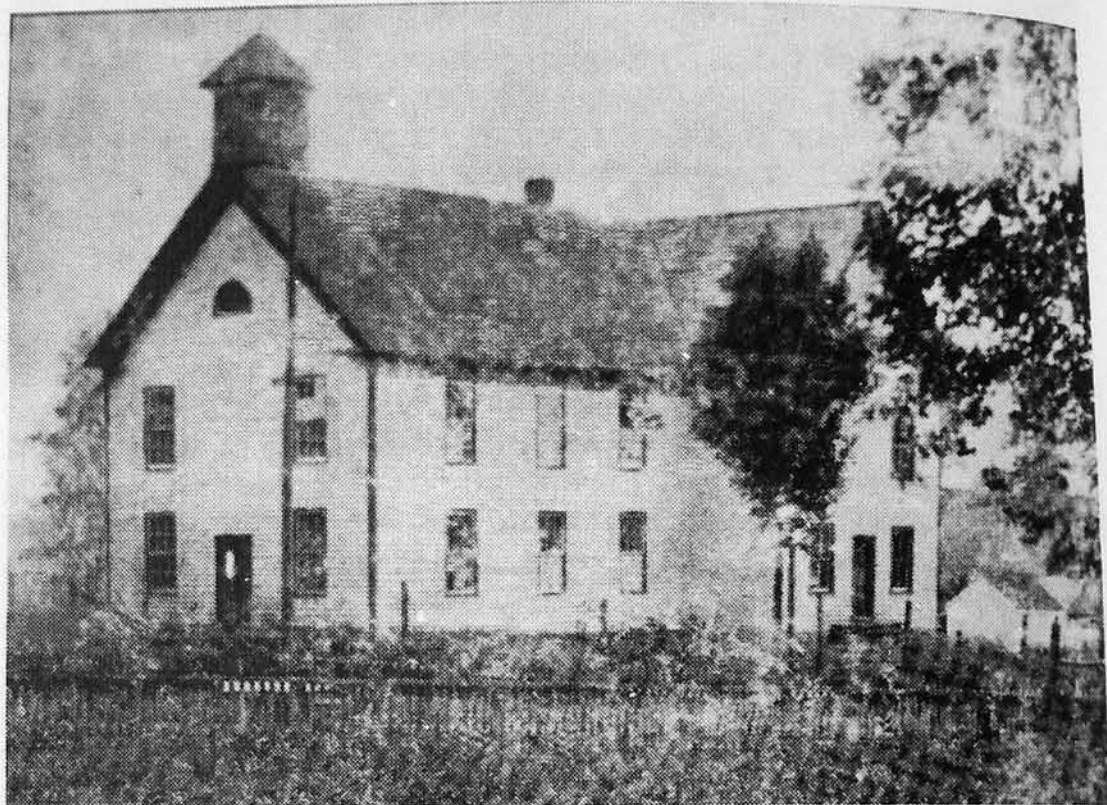
May the congregation continue to unite with the Choir in singing praises to God's honor and glory in Oak Grove Presbyterian Church!

**AN ACADEMIC CENTER** — The Ministers and people of Hillsboro churches and community have always been interested in promoting education of a wholesome and Christian character. In "Hardesty's Encyclopedia," page 369, is this record: "The first school was taught by Thomas Green in the year 1798, in a rude cabin



which stood one and one half miles north of Hillsboro, on land later owned by W. L. McNeel."

Most of the educational work in this community during the 1830's was done by the ministers. In 1833 Rev. John S. Blain while supplying the pulpit of Oak Grove Church, taught a school in Hillsboro. And we learned from the late Miss Minnie Wallace that Mr. Archibald McRoberts, a brother-in-law of John S. Blain, was the next teacher.



**THE LITTLE LEVELS ACADEMY** — And then came the event which greatly widened Hillsboro's educational influence in this part of the state. That was the coming of Rev. Joseph Brown and the establishment of the Little Levels (Pocahontas) Academy. As we have already seen, Mr. Brown came here as the pastor of Oak Grove Church in 1837. Like some of his predecessors, in addition to his pastoral duties, he taught a private school here for several years. By 1842 the school had grown to such an extent that it needed grounds, buildings, and a definite charter. In 1843 Samuel D. Poage deeded one acre of land in the heart of Hillsboro to the following: "Rev. Joseph Brown, George Poage, Sheldon Clark, Thomas Hill, Moses H. Poage, James Wiley, Sampson Matthews, and Josiah Beard, Trustees of the Little Levels Academy . . . on condition that said acre of land be used for the benefit of an academy." Hardesty gives this interesting account of the Academy's establishment: "This institution was established in 1842 under a charter granted by the State of Virginia. The incorporators were Josiah Beard, S. D. Poage, Sampson L. Matthews, Moses H. Poage, John Hill, Thomas Hill, James Miller and Richard McNeel. The first principal was the Rev. Joseph Brown, who



served as such for a period of seven years. He was succeeded by the Rev. M. D. Dunlap, who remained at the head of the institution for 11 years, or until the year 1860, when the war came on and the school was closed. In 1865 the County purchased the building, since which time it has been used for public school purposes. This was the first school of a high order in the county, and notwithstanding the short period of its existence, it left its impression upon the educational interests of this mountain region." The Academy employed not only a principal, but several other teachers, how many we do not know. One of them was the Rev. Daniel A. Penick, who married one of Col. Paul McNeel's daughters. Another was Rev. Mr. Emerson, said to have been a relative of Ralph Waldo Emerson, probably Rev. Luther Emerson. He was born in Beverly, Massachusetts, and was a Minister of the Congregational Church, later joining Lexington Presbytery.

### OTHER PRIVATE SCHOOLS

After the Civil War, when the Academy had been closed, Rev. M. D. Dunlap for a while taught a private school for boys and young men in a little building by the side of his home in Hillsboro. Other private schools from time to time were taught by: C. J. Stulting, Davis Kennison, Miss Emily Lewis, Randolph Smith, Miss Maude Patrick, a Rev. Mr. Brown (Methodist Minister), and a Mr. McCutchan (father of Rev. J. T. McCutchan). No doubt, the Academy's influence carried over to a great extent in the life and work of those post-war private schools.

### IN THE MINISTRY AND MISSIONS

A very fine service rendered by many country churches is the raising of sons and daughters for the gospel ministry and the mission field. Oak Grove Church has sent two choice children into the full time active work of the Master's Kingdom.

**JACOB SUMMERS KINNSON**, the son of Ruling Elder Allen Reaves Kinnison and Rebecca Pirkins Kinnison, who was born at Hillsboro, West Virginia, March 19, 1873, is this church's only son thus far to enter the ministry. He graduated from Hampden Sydney College, and from Union Theological Seminary, in Virginia. In 1901 he was licensed by Orange Presbytery, and ordained by East Texas Presbytery. He served churches first in Texas, and later in Georgia. From 1910 to 1913, he was pastor of Liberty Church and Group in Greenbrier Presbytery. He moved to North Carolina in 1913 and there served in several pastorates. From 1930 to 1948 he served his last pastorate before retirement, at Nutbrush Church, and group in N.C. (group meaning chapels). He died May 12, 1952.

**MRS. CARRIE STUTLING SYDENSTRICKER**, mother of the brilliant author Pearl S. Buck, was born in Hillsboro about the time of the War Between The States. A regular attendant upon the services of Oak Grove Church, she was reared with a devotion to Christ and the work of His Kingdom. Mrs. Mitchell D. Dunlap, a splendid teacher of

the Bible, is said to have had much influence in leading her to the decision to volunteer for Foreign Mission Work. She married Rev. Absalom Sydenstricker, D.D., and together they went as missionaries to China in 1880. There she gave forty years of her life to the Master's cause.

### CONCLUSION

Oak Grove Church has seen the struggles, the life, and achievements of several generations of its people. It came into being when its first men and women, together with the other American colonists, were winning the right to freedom of speech, of assembly, and of worship. Since that era, in all national crises, her sons have endeavored to do their full part toward saving this civil and religious heritage won for us by our forefathers more than two hundred years ago. During World War II, more than fifty young men from the Sunday Schools and membership of Oak Grove Church served in the nation's Armed Forces.

The high quality of Christian citizenship that has been established and maintained here; the continued interest of Hillsboro people in the things that are most worthwhile and conducive to righteousness — all this gives good promise that with renewed faith in God, and reliance upon Him, the end of this second century into which we have come, may see brighter, better, and more constructive things than that of the previous century.

“Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of Thy throne,  
Still may we dwell secure;  
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,  
And our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,  
Or earth received her frame,  
From everlasting Thou are God,  
To endless years the same.

Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guide while life shall last,  
And our eternal home.”

## APPENDIX

### THE COMMUNION SERVICE

The history of any Presbyterian Church beginning prior to the year 1800, would not be complete without some reference to its Communion Services.

It has long been the custom of sessions in the churches of Scotland to admit to the Lord's Table only those who, on coming to the service, would present to the minister the communion token. The same custom prevailed in the Presbyterian Churches in America until well into the Nineteenth Century. Accordingly, the communion token was used in the Oak Grove Church for more than a generation.

In those early years the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper was observed twice a year, usually with a week, or at least several days of preparatory services, Saturday being regarded as "The Fast Day," or final day of preparation for the Sabbath and communion. At the Saturday service the "token" would be given to those whom the session thought could properly come to the Lord's Table. And on the morrow the members would return their tokens to the pastor before approaching the Table. The word "Communion Table" had a somewhat different meaning then from what it has now. At the communion service of that time a long table would be set in front of the pulpit, covered with beautiful linen. Around this table benches were placed, and here one group of members after another would be seated and served by the elders. In the year 1774 in one of the Southern Churches, the pastor was on Saturday holding a Fast Day, or Preparation Service, for a group of his young people. He gave to them their tokens with this admonition: "I give you these tokens not knowing your hearts. May the Lord give you a token for good at His Table tomorrow." The token was a metal piece, probably about the size of a small coin.

The exact decade in which use of the communion token was discontinued here is not known. But its idea continued until well into the later half of the Nineteenth Century, for some of the older members remember that Dr. Sydenstricker mailed a small card to the members prior to the Communion Service, and they would be expected to return this card in the same spirit in which they had formerly brought their tokens to the service. The Sacrament of The Lord's Supper is now observed quarterly in Oak Grove Church.

### MEMORIAL AND GIFTS

Through the years members as well as others have contributed greatly in memory of others. It would be impossible to list all of the donors, but gifts range from monetary legacy to presentation of certain items important to the life and work of the church. These gifts are always appreciated and we think used to further the will and work of the Kingdom of God. These gifts are used discretely with good stewardship in mind, where we think they will accomplish the most. We urge others, where possible, to remember the church in your will or memorials.





### OUTPOSTS

**MARVIN CHAPEL** — The Rev. David S. Sydenstricker, D.D., was the first of the Presbyterian ministers, apparently, to preach in the new church at Marvin Chapel. Rev. John K. Fleming wrote that the scholarly Rev. Sydenstricker had accepted a call to come to the Oak Grove Church in Hillsboro, W. Va. in 1875. Marvin Chapel was not dedicated until Nov. 24, 1878. The older people at Marvin Chapel, both respectfully and affectionally, called him "Dr. Davey" Sydenstricker. He retired in 1905, and continued to make his home in Hillsboro until his death in 1913.

The timber for the building of Marvin Chapel was apparently brought from Beaver Creek, and at least in part by oxen. A tremendous improvement to the appearance of the church was made when the bell tower was constructed in 1910. The Sunday School rooms and basement were added in 1970.

The Rev. Jacob C. Johnson came in 1905, and served until 1928. He must have had some "missionary zeal" with outposts at Beard, Caesar's Mountain, and Seebert. He also had some regular preaching appointments in two Methodists churches — Marvin Chapel and Trinity Church on Stamping Creek. (This also was from the Fleming History.)

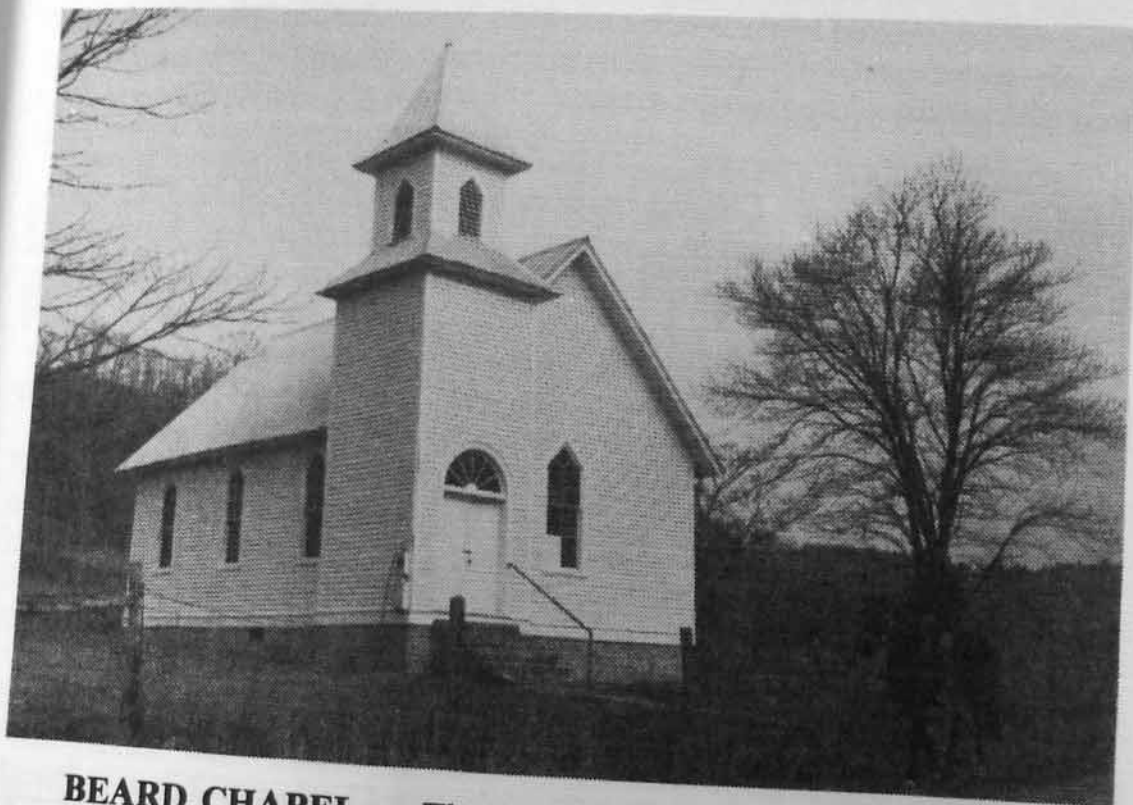
You must remember, if there were winter appointments, that for a few years there were no automobiles, and even then, there were no heaters in them. The minister had to ride a horse over all kinds of roads, and in all kinds of weather.

The other regular ministers from the Oak Grove Presbyterian Church also came to Marvin Chapel and are named in this history. The Rev. Cecil V. Dalton, who left in 1973, was the last of these ministers who came to Marvin Chapel.

The Rev. Harry Painter did quite a lot of work on the old Estey reed organ. He later, privately, sometimes brought a blind organist to play on it. It is possible for this organ to sound much like a pipe organ, especially when it was newer. The church also has a piano, purchased in 1940.

Marvin Chapel is a Methodist church. However, there were some members of the Presbyterian church in the neighborhood who helped in the building of it in 1878. It was agreed they should have the privilege of having one service in the church each month. Also, the Methodist ministers, having several churches, could only have two regular services, per month, which is the way it is today.

The congregation was usually the same group of people, and they had no denominational strife. When this old custom, or agreement, ended, it seemed that the people in the community would have liked it to have been otherwise. In fact, the extra services were carried on for about three years by using other ministers, or lay speakers, not sponsored by any other church.



**BEARD CHAPEL** — The idea for an outpost church at Beard came about when the Rev. L. P. Groves held a revival meeting in the Beard schoolhouse in 1921. He is credited with having been the person to impress upon the people the need for a Presbyterian chapel in the immediate community. Mr. R. M. Beard and Mr. John G. Hamrick solicited donations in this and surrounding communities.

In 1922 the picturesque white frame Beard Chapel was built on land once owned by Jacob Beard. Kyle Beard was present when Mack Pritt sank the first mattock blade in the ground for Beard Chapel construction to begin. The builder was Austin May, assisted by John Mc-

Coy and Sidney McCoy. Before beginning construction, the builders went to Seebert and studied the architecture of the Seebert Church. They built the Beard Chapel on the same lines but on a larger scale.

Dedication services were held in November 1922. Rev. Groves preached the dedication sermon and Rev. J. C. Johnson was the pastor. Succeeding Oak Grove pastors preached here.

Mr. John G. Hamrick and Mr. H. H. Beard were long time Sunday School Superintendents. A few of the Sunday School teachers were Mrs. Blanche Hamrick, Mayo Beard, Mrs. H. H. Beard, Mrs. C. N. Dorman, Mrs. Dorsey May and Mrs. Denny Callison.

The women formed the Beard Circle and met regularly in the members' homes.

Some time in the 1970's after Rev. Cecil Dalton left and some people in the Beard area were only part time residents, services in the chapel were suspended. When Rev. Jack Arbuckle came to Oak Grove he was consulted about preaching services at Beard Chapel during the summer months. He very kindly consented to do this. Jack and Mattie came down faithfully on the two Sundays a month scheduled and bought the little country chapel to life again for a few years. When more people moved away on June 7, 1981 it was decided the remaining people could go to Hillsboro to Oak Grove, conveniently. Services were discontinued at Beard Chapel.

**SEEBERT OUTPOST** — The outpost work at Seebert began in 1906 when Oak Grove Church, in connection with the Methodist Protestants, established a union work. The two denominations purchased in that year a lot from Lou Clendenin at the price of one hundred and fifty dollars.

A white frame building was built. The Walter Clark family was one of the families worshipping there. Mr. Walter Clark was the long time Sunday School Superintendent. Mrs. Ota Henfer, now 91, remembers walking to preaching as a girl, from the Lewis home. She and friends walked to Presbyterian revival meetings at night.

Many families moved from Seebert and worship services were discontinued. On August 29, 1948 the Oak Grove Committee decided to accept E. L. Auldridge's bid of one hundred and fifty dollars for the building lot. They received one half of this, the other half going to the Methodist Protestants. On Oct. 31, 1948 the committee decided to use the seventy-five dollars for the Oak Grove furnace fund.

**CAESAR MOUNTAIN** — Rev. J. C. Johnson began holding Sunday School and Church services on Caesar Mountain in the school building. The services were continued by succeeding pastors after Rev. Johnson had moved from Hillsboro. Rev. Collier Harvey was the last minister to hold services there before the school building was sold. Various members of Oak Grove served as Sunday School Superintendent and teachers of the Sunday School Classes. Vacation Bible School was held there for a number of years. There was also a circle for a number of years until a large number of the circle members moved away.



**FEDERAL PRISON CAMP** — In 1938 a Federal Prison Camp was opened on Cranberry Mountain seven miles from Mill Point. The Rev. John K. Fleming started holding services for the inmates once each month. These services were continued by the various ministers until the camp was closed in 1959. Rev. Gardien requested Bibles from the Gideons and they supplied twenty-five Bibles for the use of the men. The choir presented a Christmas program in 1950. Different church members assisted the ministers in conducting the services and teaching Sunday School.

### CHURCH COURT BOUNDARIES

Prior to April 12, 1838, Oak Grove was a member of Lexington Presbytery in Virginia. A meeting of Synod of Virginia Oct. 10, 1837, shows that upon the request of the churches west of the Allegheny Mountains, a line was drawn, that 25 years later would be the dividing line between Va. and W. Va., except for Pendleton Co. The organizing Presbytery, to be known as Greenbrier, met at Lewisburg from Tuesday through Saturday. The sermon being preached by the venerable John McElhenney on Psalm 20:5, "and in the name of your God we will set up our banner." After the sermon the Presbytery of Greenbrier was constituted with a prayer.

The churches included in the Presbytery were Old Stone (Lewisburg), Union, Spring Creek (Renick), Oak Grove (Hillsboro), Liberty (Greenbank), Tygarts Valley (Huttonsville), Muddy Creek, Anthony's Creek, Kanawha-Salines (Charleston), Parkersburg, Point Pleasant, Hugh's River, Carmel (Gap Mills), and Huntersville.

Rev. Joseph Brown, representing Oak Grove, was among the eight ministers and six Elders listed as present.

Greenbrier lost part of its area in 1911 when 26 churches formed Tygart Valley Presbytery. This being a weak Presbytery with only four self sustaining churches, Tygart Valley Presbytery reverted back to the leadership of Lexington Presbytery. In 1895 Kanawha Presbytery was formed in a meeting at Malden, W. Va., with 19 churches at its beginning.

Oct. 27, 1914 marked the beginning of the West Virginia Synod. At an organizational meeting at Old Stone Church the following Presbyteries were listed: Greenbrier 39 churches, Tygart Valley 26 churches and Kanawha 22 churches. This Synod was merged June 18, 1973 into the Synod of the Virginias. Thus the Synod of West Virginia was in existence for 59 years.

In 1927 Tygart Valley Presbytery was dissolved and the churches returned to Greenbrier Presbytery. At this time Bluestone Presbytery was formed from parts of Kanawha and Greenbrier Presbyteries. In 1968, to more evenly distribute strength, Bluestone Presbytery was dissolved. With some of the Kanawha churches, Guyandotte Presbytery was formed. Through these years we were centrally located in Greenbrier Presbytery which generally contained the eastern part of

the state, from Philippi to Hinton. From the history by Dr. Dorsey D. Ellis, it appears that in 1788 we were part of the Synod of Philadelphia.

In the early 1970's the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church changed its entire program structure. The separate boards under which the church's various tasks had been executed were dissolved and all function of the church were brought together under one General Assembly Mission Board. With this reorganization came the restructure of Presbyteries and Synods. The result came Jan. 1, 1974 when the three Presbyteries, which generally was the Synod of West Virginia, became one Presbytery. There was much debate over what to name the new group. After someone said it was easy to spell, "Greenbrier," the historic name, won out.

One of the marks of achievement of the Presbytery was its program of care for the aging. A number of housing units for elderly people were built in different parts of the Presbytery.

Oct. 19-21, 1979 Presbyterians, wearing large buttons announcing: "We're part of something big," gathered in The Charleston Civic Center in a Presbyterian Celebration. Here we witnessed the march through the aisles of 114 churches displaying their church banners. The march was organized according to the date of organization. This put Oak Grove near the front of the march.

On July 1, 1985 the Presbyterian Church in the United States, of which we were a part, merged with the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. The division took place during the Civil War and it was not until this time, after several failures, that the differences were worked out.

This event brought about more merging, so on July 1, 1987 Greenbrier Presbytery, along with the smaller Presbyteries of Parkersburg and Grafton, became the Presbytery of West Virginia. It includes one church in Ohio, one in Virginia and all of West Virginia except the two panhandles.

The new body, comprising 160 churches, voted to leave the Synod of the Virginias and enter the Synod of the Trinity which includes 14 Presbyteries in Pennsylvania, one in the upper Ohio Valley along with the West Virginia Presbytery to make a total of 1391 churches and 382,827 members.

## **OAK GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HILLSBORO, WEST VIRGINIA**

The story of the Oak Grove Presbyterian Church is one that really has no beginning and no end. It traces its origin to a community of believers in a pioneer settlement known as "Little Levels," yet its roots go far deeper than that. Oak Grove's history goes back to and is vitally linked with the very beginning of the church itself.

The story of Oak Grove is the church's story. It tells how God called men, women, and children to worship Him . . . to serve Him by serving His people . . . and to spread His message of Good News with others as followers of Jesus Christ. Oak Grove's humble beginning is very similar to that of the early church, where people met, worshipped God, and communed together in the homes of the church's members.

The history of Oak Grove is the story of people, ordinary people, whom God called and through whom God worked. It's the story not only of elders, and deacons, and pastors, whose names appear in these pages, but also of others who left their mark on this place. The history of Oak Grove includes children and teachers and worshippers who passed through these doors and who learned about and served God here. It's the story of people who were nurtured in the Christian faith by this congregation, as well as those who tried to nurture and challenge the faith of this community of believers.

The story of Oak Grove Presbyterian Church continues to unfold. On this occasion the members of Oak Grove give thanks and praise to God for all He has done through the life and ministry of this church. We celebrate two centuries of God's work through His people here. Yet we anticipate and embark upon a third century of ministry as a community of faith. The story . . . God's story . . . continues . . .

June, 1988



**OAK GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
MEMBERSHIP ROLL  
MAY, 1988**

Alderman,	Ann Jimmy Paul
Balzer,	Letty
Beard,	Clarence Laura
Beard,	Forrest
Beard,	Kyle Katherine
Beard,	Lucy
Beard,	Sherman Mary Alice
Beard,	Bill Barbara Sarah*, Steven*
Bennett	A. J. Gwyn
Bowman,	Ruth
Burns,	Ruby
Callison,	Joel Stella Matthias*
Callison,	Hubert Virginia
Chappell,	John Wilda
Clowser,	Bessie
Crickenberger,	David Phyllis Margaret, Joseph, Thomas

Edgar,	Betsy
Feagans,	Lena
Flaim,	Susan Nathan, Kevin
Fleming,	Jim Helen Suzy
Galford,	Ellen
Hanson,	Terri
Hefner,	Ota Alec
Hilleary,	Johnny Arlene Rachel*, Rebecca*, Renee*
Hilleary,	Paul
Hollandsworth,	Daniel Sue
Holsopple,	Harry
Kellison,	Clarice
Kerns,	Pat
Kinnison,	Virginia
Landis,	Treva
Lewis,	Barbara
Lewis,	Hubert
Lewis,	Zell
Macaulay,	Pam Alec*
Marshall,	Jane Robert

McKeever,	Hazel
McLaughlin,	Lois Chad
McNeel,	Allan Brian, Jason
McNeel,	Donald Karen Chris*, Ruthana*, Ben*
McNeel,	Jacob
McNeel,	Lanty Janet John L., Charles R. Jeff Weber
McNeel,	Lee John K.
McNeel,	Louise
McNeel,	Moffett Elma Charles A.
McNeel,	Peggy
McNeel,	Sam Jr.
Minion,	Bill Claudia Sara Lagace*, Henry
Moore,	William Opal
Nottingham,	Ken Sally Shawn
Pritt,	Victoria
Randolph,	Lynn Carolyn



Rock,	James K. Annie Frances
Rose,	Penick Jenny Christy
Rose,	Vicki Stephanie, Chris
Ruckman,	Wilmer
Saffer,	Dede Patrick, Shannon
Scott,	Marie Kyle Mattie
Sharp,	Donald Sharon Chris, Andrew*
Sheets,	Priscilla
Shields,	Arberta
Shields,	Thelma
Simmons,	Gene Linda Amy Widney, David*, Dustin*, Daniel*
Simmons,	Houston Mary White
Simmons,	Larry Sandy Laura*, Cheryl*
Starks,	Edgar Doris Ann Lois Ann
Thompson,	Boyd Irene

VanReenen,	Charles Ruth Dennis, Steven*, Joshua
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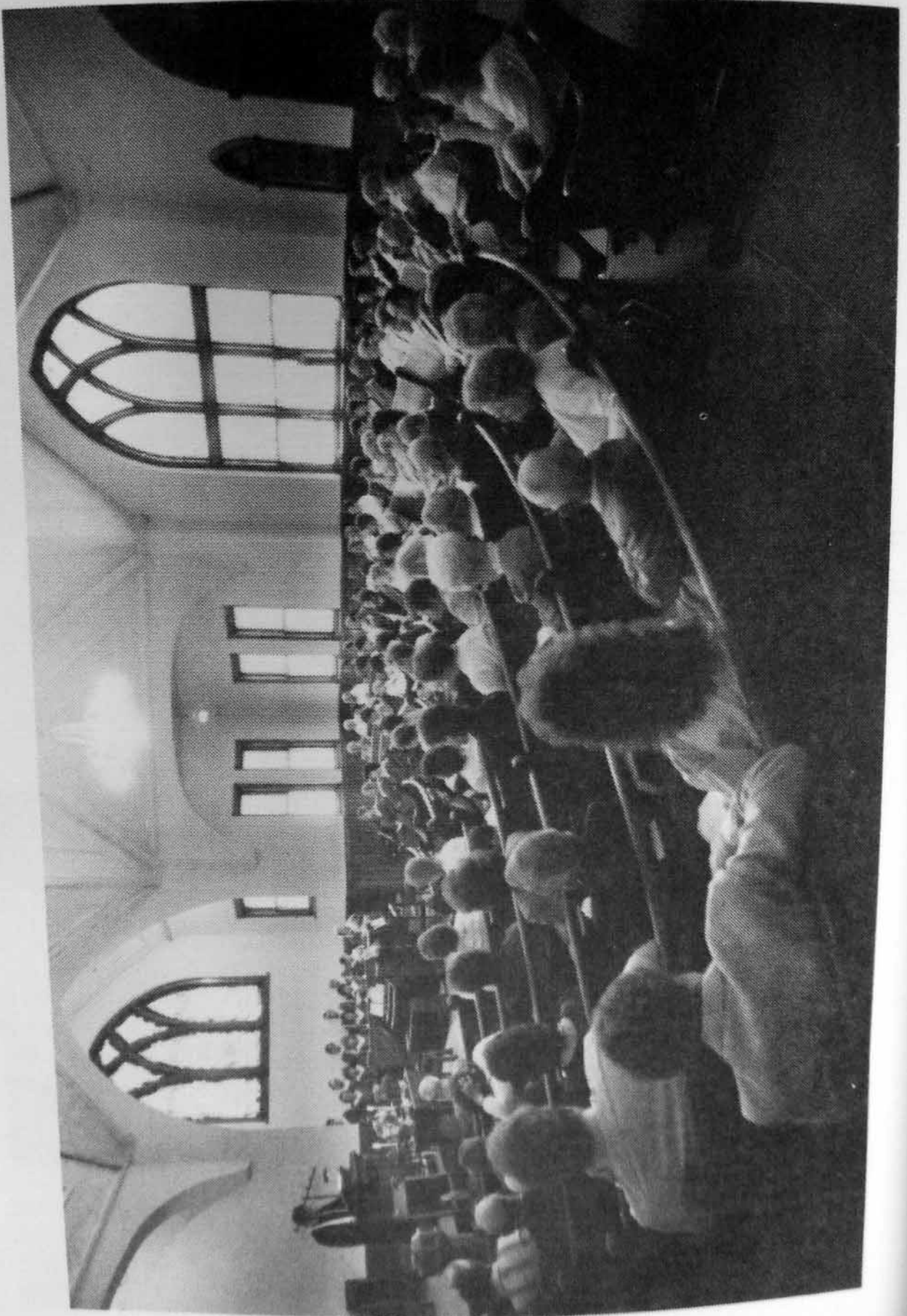
VanReenen,	Hubert Hallie
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VanReenen,	Thomas Linda Timothy*
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White,	Preston Iva
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Workman,	Lawrence Nora Matt
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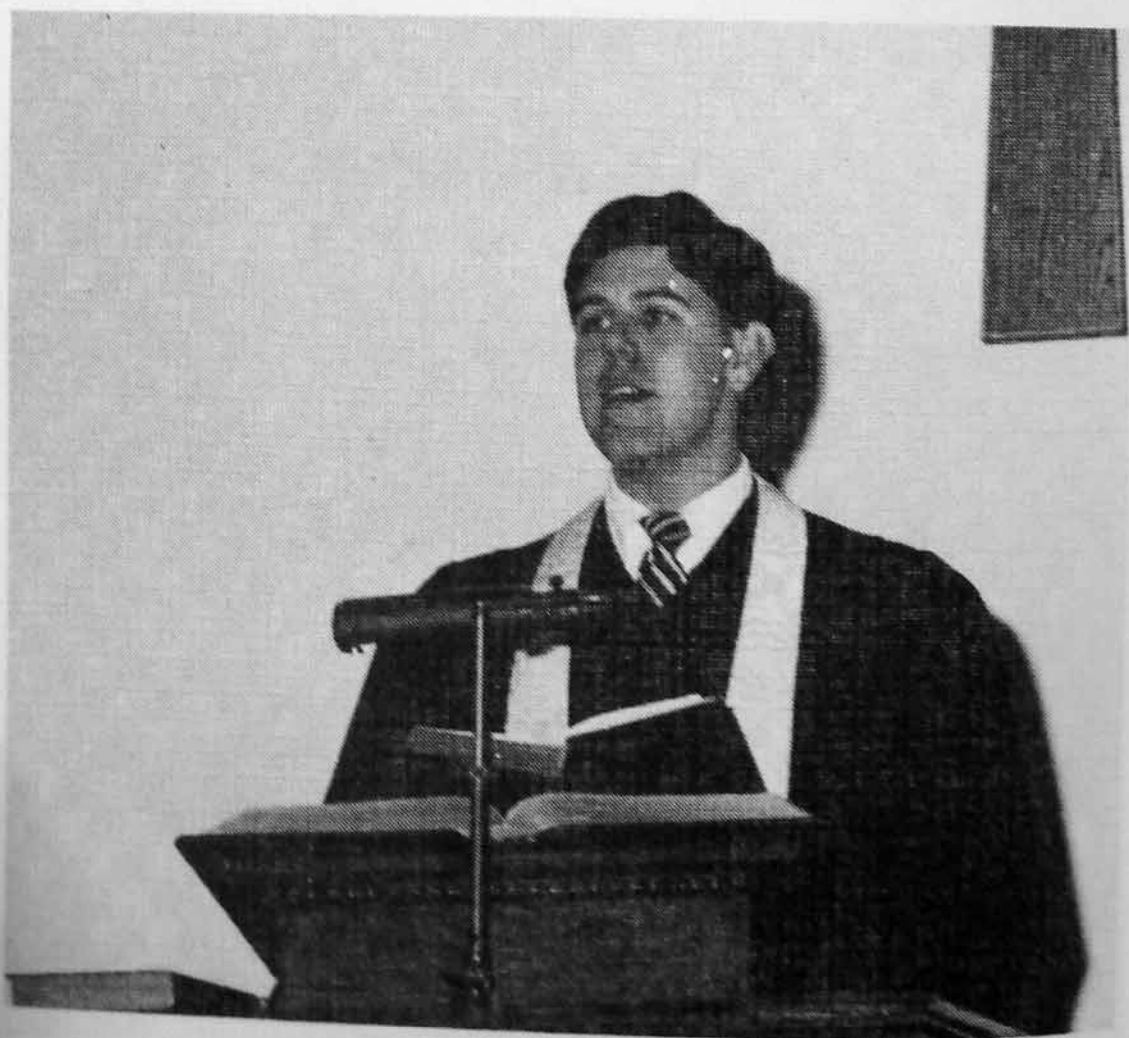
**\*Baptized Members**  
**Members: 125**  
**Families: 72**















**Oak Grove Work Camp**

